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January 2020

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POLE VAULT

How Flentrop
Orgelbouw set
about restoring a
late renaissance
organ in Poland

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PATH OF GLORY

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Oberammergau's Passion Play

TOP 20
Best Albums
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in our New Music section
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CAMBRIDGE DIET

Meet New Music 2020 partners Clare College

NICOLAS DE GRIGNY

Launching a new series on performance practice

THE INFLUENCE OF MOZART

From modest forces to a cast of hundreds in Handel's *Messiah*





Düsseldorf (GER) Robert Schumann University

2019

Hauptwerk	I.	C - c4	Positiv (expr.)	II.	C - c4	Récit (expr.)	III.	C - c4	Pedal	C - g1
Principal		16'	Bourdon		16'	Cor de Chamois		16'	Untersatz	32'
Principal		8'	Principal		8'	Bourdon		8'	Principal	16'
Gedackt		8'	Holzgedackt		8'	Flûte		8'	Subbass	16'
Flûte harm.		8'	Salicional		8'	Viole		8'	Principal	8'
Viola da Gamba		8'	Unda maris		8'	Aeoline		8'	Gedackt	8'
Octave		4'	Prestant		4'	Voix céleste		8'	Cello	8'
Blockflöte		4'	Rohrflöte		4'	Principal		4'	Flöte	4'
Quinte		2 2/3'	Sesquialtera	II	2 2/3'	Fugara		4'	Bombarde	16'
Superoctave		2'	Doublette		2'	Flûte trav.		4'	Fagott	16'
Mixtur major	V	2'	Larigot		1 1/3'	Nazard		2 2/3'	Posaune	8'
Mixtur minor	IV -V 1	1 1/3'	Scharff	IV	1'	Octavin		2'	Klarine	4'
Cornet	V	8'	Krummhorn		8'	Tierce		1 3/5'		
Trompete		16'	Klarinette		8'	Piccolo		1'		
Trompete		8'	Tremulant			Fourniture	III-V	2 2/3'		
						Basson		16'		
						Trompette harm.		8'		
						Hautbois		8'		
						Clairon harm.		4'		
						Voix humaine		8'		
						Tremolo				

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Sound judgment

‘They all laughed when Edison recorded sound.’ So wrote Ira Gershwin in one of his memorable songs, set to music by his younger brother George for the 1937 film *Shall We Dance*. It was 60 years before that film, in 1877, that the prolific inventor and US businessman Thomas Edison unleashed the phonograph onto the world, the first invention capable of both recording and reproducing sound.

We have come such a long way since then, in terms of both recording and listening to sound: through wax cylinders and magnetic tape to hi-fi stereo and vinyl discs, to digital recording, compact discs, and digital audio files. Alongside today’s sophisticated technology, the early inventions may seem primitive and crude; but there is still a thrill to be had, for example, in visiting Tennyson’s house on the Isle of Wight and listening to an 1890 wax cylinder recording of the poet declaiming his *The Charge of the Light Brigade*.

Much has been discussed about the threat of digital downloading to the recording industry, which, when done illegally, deprives artists, composers and record companies of their rightful dues. However, some have positively embraced the new possibilities that the digital era has presented, when carried out within legal limits. When Signum Records celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2017, founder-director Steve Long told me that downloading and upstreaming had opened up new global markets for classical music that would previously have been unimaginable, and that for Signum Classics there has been a correlation



between tracks streamed and album sales of those releases.

Certainly, in drawing together the top reviews of choral and organ albums from 2019 for this issue (see p.76), the evidence is that the recording industry is still very much alive and thriving. In fact, there were so many really excellent reviews, that reducing them down to ten in each genre was a bit of a head-scratcher.

Such exercises are in any case to some

extent spurious – one person’s meat is another’s poison. But for a magazine that generally looks to the present and the future rather than to the past, it was heartwarming to look back and acknowledge the variety and high quality of so much that has emerged from record labels over the past year.

So by what criteria were albums finally chosen? Given that both the level of performing and recording quality were necessarily exceptionally fine in each case, those that made the final cut also brought something a bit extra that made our reviewer sit up and take notice, such as a fresh presentation of well-known repertoire; the application of new scholarly research; an overall programme that tells a story; authenticity of sound; premiere recordings of new compositions; or a revisiting of works that have fallen from today’s standard repertoire. In short, an alchemy of several factors that have resulted in something you would want to have on your shelves. So three cheers for the recording industry – who’s got the last laugh now?

Maggie Hamilton

Choir & Organ shines a global spotlight on two distinctive fields of creativity, celebrating inventiveness and excellence in all their forms.

We aim to inspire our readers through giving a platform to conductors, organists, composers, and choirs of every kind; and by showcasing the imaginative craft of pipe organ building across the centuries, critiquing new organs and tackling ethics in restoring historic instruments.

Specialist writers appraise new editions and recordings of standard repertoire and works fresh from the composer’s pen, while our news and previews chart the latest developments in a changing world and present opportunities to become involved.

Choir & Organ is an invitation to engage with two unique areas of music – to explore the new, and look afresh at the familiar.

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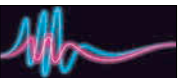
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CHANDOS

THE SOUND OF CLASSICAL

40

THE BEST OF CHANDOS 2019



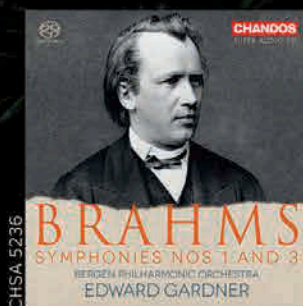
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CHAN 20032



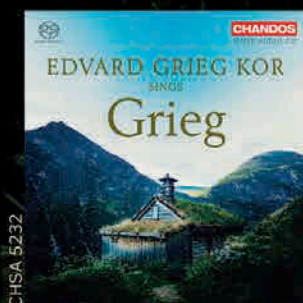
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Melanie Lawlor at work in Wells Cathedral.

SIR STEPHEN CLEOBURY (1948-2019)



COURTESY KING'S COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE

▲ 'Stephen was always dynamic and energetic': Sir Stephen Cleobury directed the world-renowned Choir of King's College, Cambridge for 37 years

THE FORMER DIRECTOR OF MUSIC AT KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE died from cancer at the age of 70, on 22 November 2019.

Prior to his retirement from the role at the College in September 2019, Sir Stephen Cleobury had led the world-renowned choir for 37 years, following in the footsteps of his predecessors A.H. Mann, Boris Ord, Sir David Willcocks and Sir Philip Ledger. His time at King's saw the Choir record a wide range of repertoire, from Byrd and Purcell to 20th-century and contemporary composers.

Many have paid tribute since his death to the legacy he leaves behind, which includes a new commission each year for the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols broadcast live on BBC radio on Christmas Eve and

Christmas Day. Cleobury's final Festival as music director has since been released as a commemorative album marking the 100th service: *A Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols: The Centenary Service* [KGS 0036].

Stephen Cleobury was a chorister at Worcester Cathedral, where he was taught by Douglas Guest, Christopher Robinson and Harry Bramma; he went on to study music and was an organ scholar at St John's College, Cambridge under George Guest, subsequently taking up the sub-organist's post at Westminster Abbey. In 1979, he became the first Anglican master of music at Westminster Cathedral.

Moving to King's College, Cambridge in 1982 as director of music, he also conducted the Cambridge University Musical Society

from 1983 and 2009; from 1995 to 2007, Cleobury served as chief conductor of the BBC Singers. He was knighted in the 2019 Queen's Birthday Honours for services to choral music.

The Revd Dr Stephen Cherry, Dean of King's, told BBC Look East that 'Stephen was always dynamic and energetic; he always knew his own mind, he always had a great sense of purpose, and fantastic attention to detail, and he cared about everything. He was an energising presence, but also a very real human being. You felt you were with a warm-hearted person with Stephen.'

C&O's February issue will include a special tribute to Sir Stephen Cleobury, in acknowledgement of his outstanding contribution to the choral world.

CELEBRATIONS AT SALISBURY

SALISBURY CATHEDRAL MARKS ITS 800TH ANNIVERSARY in 2020 with a year-long series of events entitled 'Salisbury 2020: City on the move', in which music will play a key role.

The celebrations also include the rededication of the Cathedral's Father Willis organ following a major restoration. On Easter day (12 April), the 2020 Organ Festival will open with Choral Evensong, featuring Walton's *Coronation Te Deum*. Performers in the festival include Robert Huw Morgan, Richard Pinel, Anna Lapwood, Andrew Lumsden, and the organists of Salisbury Cathedral.

On 4 April, Salisbury Cathedral Choir, accompanied by the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, will perform Bach's *St John Passion*. The anniversary of the laying of the Cathedral's foundation stones will be officially marked on Sunday 3 May with a broadcast of Sunday Worship on BBC Radio 4, as well as a recording of Choral Evensong for BBC Radio 3.

Following this, David Briggs will perform his organ transcription of Mahler's *Second Symphony*, alongside soloists Judith Howarth, Avery Amereau, and choral ensembles from Salisbury on 13 May. The Family Concert on 13 June will showcase *Peter and the Wolf* on the organ, while Thomas Trotter's recital on 17 June will feature Elgar's Organ Sonata.

In July, the first CD of the newly-restored organ will be released on the Cathedral's label at the Organ Prom (11 July), which presents classical favourites in an informal atmosphere, concluding with Elgar's 'Pomp and Circumstance' March no.1.

The month of November sees the Cathedral Choir and friends performing Monteverdi's *Vespers* with instrumental ensemble Florilegium (21 November), while on 12 December the Choir will perform Handel's *Messiah* with the City of London Sinfonia.

John Challenger, assistant director of music at Salisbury Cathedral, told C&O, 'Next year is an exciting year for us. The 2020 anniversary celebrations are the perfect excuse to expand our musical offering with an ambitious programme, which explores sacred music across the centuries. The famous Father Willis organ will return in style, and our 2020 Organ Festival – including performances by David Briggs and Thomas Trotter – will be a fitting celebration of the return of a marvellous instrument.' salisburycathedral.org.uk

▼ Salisbury's 800th anniversary celebrations will rededicate the Father Willis organ after a major restoration



IN BRIEF

The **Royal Philharmonic Society Awards** were held in London on 28 Nov 2019. Russian composer Sofia Gabaïdulina, aged 88, was presented with the RPS Gold Medal by Dame Janet Baker. The Concert Series and Events Award was won by Sir James MacMillan's Ayrshire festival The Cumnock Tryst. royalphilharmonicsociety.org.uk

Organist, conductor and composer Malcom Archer has been confirmed as **Sing for Pleasure's** masterclass guest at its first 2020 London training weekend. The programme runs from 1-2 Feb and features a Choral Conducting Masterclass, aimed at conductors already working at an Advanced level. Archer will work alongside Catherine Beddison to present the class. singforpleasure.org.uk

The Chapter of Wells Cathedral has appointed **Jeremy Cole** as its new director of music. Having joined as assistant organist in September 2017, Cole since became acting organist and master of the choristers in September 2019. He will be officially admitted on 12 Jan. wellscathedral.org.uk

The **Ivors Composer Awards 2019** took place on 4 Dec. *The Salamander and The Moonmaker* composed by Edward Gregson won the Amateur or Young Performers Award, bringing together a children's choir of 8-12-year-olds. The award for the Choral category went to Geoff Hannan for his piece *Pocket Universe*. ivorsacademy.com

In 2020 London-based chamber choir, **Vasari Singers**, marks its 40th year of music-making under its founder-conductor Jeremy Backhouse. The choir celebrates with a year-long programme of events, including a recording of contemporary choral music, a come-and-sing workshop, a gala anniversary concert, cathedral services and concerts. vasarisingers.org

FORTHCOMING EVENTS



INSPIRING CHORAL LEADERSHIP

Cambiata NW Boys Singing Workshops

18 Jan and 8 Mar, Macclesfield

Cambiata North West (CNW) is a regional singing initiative with the aim of encouraging as many boys as possible to keep singing throughout their time at secondary school. Returning for its eighth year, Ian Crawford and Andy Brooke lead two days of singing workshops for boys aged between 10 and 18.

Spring Initial Course

21 Mar, 25 Apr, 13 Jun and 4 Jul,
The Hall School, London

Tutors of the four one-day sessions include Lucy Griffiths and Mark Jordan. The course is designed to lay firm foundations for anyone who has an interest in learning to lead singing of any kind, or who has recently started to conduct a choir.

Basic Conducting Skills Day

16 May, Leeds

This popular day, led by Sue Hollingworth, is for anyone new to conducting, or those with some experience already who want to back it up with training. Booking opens soon.

35th Annual Convention: The *abcd* Choral Leaders' Festival

28-30 Aug, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

The Convention returns with a programme of workshops, courses, performances and trade exhibitions. Save the date.

For details of all events, including online booking where applicable, and general information about *abcd*, visit abcd.org.uk

CELEBRATORY ORGAN RECITALS



COURTESY SHREWSBURY ABBEY

▲ The 1911 Hill organ is to be renovated after Easter

SHREWSBURY ABBEY IS HOLDING CELEBRATORY ORGAN RECITALS from January to Easter 2020. The five free recitals, which will take place on the first Saturday of each month, will celebrate 108 years of service by the Abbey's 1911 Hill organ, as well as raise funds for the instrument's renovation.

On 4 January, the Royal College of Organists' current Harry Gabb Scholar, Paul Greally, opens the series, followed by Catherine Ennis on 1 February, Thomas

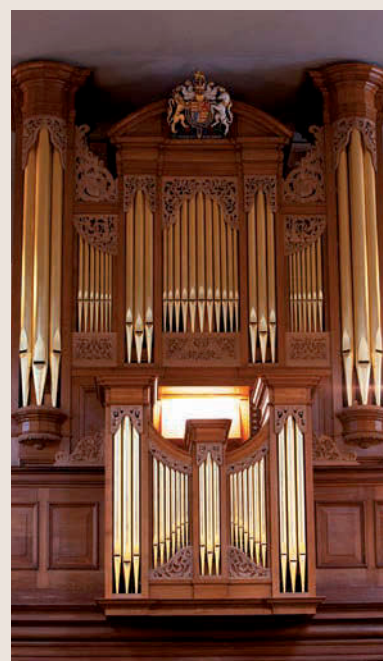
Trotter on 7 March and James McVinnie on 4 April. Shrewsbury's associate director of music and organist Nigel Pursey will perform on Easter Monday, concluding the series. Pursey told C&O, 'We are delighted that three leading international recitalists, and one of the UK's most promising young organists, have agreed to play the Abbey's 1911 Hill organ.'

The renovation will begin immediately after the final recital, when the organ will be decommissioned and switched off. As part of the first phase, GO Organbuilders will renovate the organ's actions, clean the whole instrument, electrify and restore the console, eradicate woodworm and improve the internal access. The second phase will complete the organ to Hill's 1911 specification.

Speaking about the renovation, Pursey said, 'The work starting after Easter is the most important for over 100 years. The renovated and completed Hill organ will be magnificent; it will encourage the development of future generations of organists and assure continuation of the Abbey's centuries-old choral tradition.'

Collections will be taken at each recital to raise money for the project, but the events will be free of charge. shrewsburyabbey.com

The William Drake pipe organ in Chelsea Old Church has been completed, providing the London church with a new three-manual and pedal, 33-stop instrument. Director of music Andrew Macmillan told C&O, 'The instrument is an exciting new departure for the company, versatile as both concert and liturgical organ.' The case design was inspired by that in the 13th-century church of St Peter & St Paul in Holsworthy, Devon, which is thought to have come from an 18th-century organ at Chelsea Old Church. The instrument combines Victorian influences and the English classical tradition for which William Drake Limited are renowned. Although the organ was first heard at Mattins on 22 September, organist Nathan Laube will perform a celebratory organ concert on 19 January at 7.30pm, showcasing a range of repertoire spanning across the centuries. Further concerts will take place in February and March, featuring Daniel Moulton and David Davies respectively. chelseaoldchurch.org.uk



COURTESY CHELSEA OLD CHURCH

GRAMMY NOMINATIONS

KEVIN VONDRAK



▲ Under Donald Nally, The Crossing received two of the five GRAMMY nominations for their albums in the Best Choral Performance category

THE GRAMMY NOMINEES FOR THE BEST CHORAL PERFORMANCE 2020 were announced on 20 November. The category, for which conductors, choral directors and choral ensembles are nominated based on an album release, names five nominated albums.

Under the direction of Donald Nally, Philadelphia-based choir The Crossing received two nominations for their albums *Voyages* [Innova 1028] by Robert Convery and C.S. Boyle and *The Arc in the Sky* [Nanova 6240] by Kile Smith, both of which feature works commissioned by Nally for the choir. The Crossing is a professional chamber choir dedicated to new music, often addressing social, environmental and political issues. Nally told *C&O*, 'While we certainly don't invest in these new works in order to win awards, we have found, to our

delight, that GRAMMY nominations really do shine a light on works that we think are important additions to the canon.'

Also nominated was Houston Chamber Choir for its album *Duruflé: Complete Choral Works* [Signum Classics SIGCD 571], which features organist Ken Cowan. Conducted by Robert Simpson, the professional ensemble is dedicated to increasing the awareness, appreciation and esteem of choral music through performance, outreach and education. Simpson said, 'I am thrilled that our efforts have been recognised by The Recording Academy with this prestigious nomination.'

For its album *The Hope of Loving* [Delos DE 3578], *Conspirare* under the direction of Craig Hella Johnson has received a nomination in the category. The album showcases the choral music of Jake

Runestad, combining music and texts from contemporary poets, American naturalists and ancient mystics.

The fifth nominee is *The Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom* by Kurt Sander [Reference Recordings Fresh! FR 731], performed by soloists Evan Bravos, Vadim Gan, Kevin Keys, Glenn Miller and Daniel Shirley, alongside the PaTRAM Institute Singers. The group comprises American and Russian singers under the direction of Peter Jermihov, presenting Orthodox sacred music rooted in the traditions of Russian choral composers.

Following the Awards ceremony on Sunday 26 January, the winner of the Best Choral Performance category will be announced on the *C&O* website: choirandorgan.com.

PHILIP VILE



Snape Maltings has announced its relaunch of Friday Afternoons, the project to widen access to high quality music for young people. Since 2013, the scheme has brought singing to schools around the world, commissioning new music each year. The new set of songs for 2020 will be composed by Russell Hepplewhite, to texts by Michael Rosen; they will be premiered by the London Youth Choir. fridayafternoonsmusic.co.uk

EVENTS

Dartington Music Summer School & Festival has announced its 2020 course programme, running from 25 Jul-22 Aug. Under the curation of its new artistic director, Sara Mohr-Pietsch, each of the four weeks explores a different theme and incorporates concerts, courses and workshops. Booking is open at dartington.org.

Organists Online and Music in Bloomsbury present their 10th **Organ Day** on 25 Jan at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church. The day includes performances by students at the RCO Academy

COURTESY PHILIP LUKE



▲ The Organ Day is held in Bloomsbury, London

Organ School, recitals by Paul Greally and Westminster Abbey organ scholar Alexander Hamilton, and a masterclass by Dame Gillian Weir; the closing celebrity recital will be given by Catherine Ennis (tickets: £7). Events in the afternoon are free, but registration is advised at organistsonline.org.

The Royal College of Organists (RCO) present an **Advanced Performance Class** on 4 Feb at St George's Hanover Square, London. Teaching the course will be Dr Iain Quinn, covering interpretation, technique and performance skills and providing the opportunity to perform in public. Participants will play on the 2012 Richards, Fowkes & Co. organ and are asked to prepare a 7-minute piece of their choice. Quinn will give a recital at 1.10pm on the same day. A place in the class is £66 for RCO members; £30 for RCO student members; £38 for full time students; and £77 for non-members. rco.org.uk

CHORAL COURSES LAUNCHED



ED HOSSACK

▲ The Rodolfus Foundation's Choral Courses 'bring together young people from a wide range of backgrounds'

THE RODOLFUS FOUNDATION HAS LAUNCHED ITS 2020 CHORAL COURSE PROGRAMME, celebrating 40 years of running courses for singers aged 8-21.

In its announcement in November, the Foundation also revealed a new bursary scheme worth £40,000, which aims to introduce young people from deprived areas of London to choral singing. Throughout 2020, seven residential courses will take place for young singers and organists at venues in Eton, Cambridge, Oxford, Uppingham, Cheltenham and Wellington.

The Junior Courses are for children aged 8-15 and the Choral Courses are for young people aged 16-21. Participants in the latter will prepare for three main performances, as well as attend sessions in sightreading, aural tests and solo performance; a cappella workshops, vocal masterclasses and sessions with visiting conductors will also form part of the course. The Junior Courses are similar in format, but the repertoire is lighter.

Simon Toyne, a Choral Course director, said, 'One of the reasons the courses are so special is that they bring together young people from a wide range of backgrounds to work towards a common goal. People are often surprised to learn that the courses are completely unauditioned and, thanks to the generous bursaries on offer, open to absolutely everyone.'

Christian, an 11-year-old member of Hackney Children's Choir, said, 'Being on the Choral Courses has helped with my confidence in music and helped me to push myself too. I recently got a place at Christ's Hospital School and I'm sure that having been on the Junior Choral Courses will help me when I go there, as the courses have got me used to being away from my home in Hackney.'

After the course, many of the young people are invited to sing with the Rodolfus Choir, a youth choir made up of singers aged 16-25. The choir has links to the Philharmonia Orchestra and the Three Choirs Festival. therodolfusfoundation.org.uk

Olivier Latry presents an Organ Course from 8-12 Jan in Hamburg to mark the 150th birthday of Louis Vierne. The course will be held on the Kuhn organ at the St Johannis Kulturkirche Altona, and will include classes, an organ tour of Hamburg, discussions and public recitals. Featured composers include Widor, Franck, Baré and Vierne. Individual courses can be attended for €35; day tickets can be purchased for €60; places on the full course are €240. organpromotion.de



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ALL CHANGE

COURTESY LÉTOURNEAU PIPE ORGANS



▲ Fernand Létourneau hands over to Dudley Oakes, who takes on the Canadian organ builders

LÉTOURNEAU PIPE ORGANS' FOUNDER HAS HANDED OVER THE BATON after 40 years of continuous operation. Taking over as of 5 November 2019 is Dr Dudley Oakes, who will work alongside the existing management team as president and owner of the Canadian organ builders.

Oakes replaces founder Fernand Létourneau, who began working in the pipe organ industry in 1965 and founded his own company in 1979. His achievements include being awarded the Royal Canadian College of Organists' Prize of Excellence in 2016. Speaking about the change, he said, 'I am so pleased Dudley Oakes has taken over Orgues Létourneau as I know the company is in good hands. I never dreamed we would be so successful when I started out 40 years ago, and today I am delighted a new generation is carrying on our work.'

The new president has been with Létourneau since 1987 and holds a Doctorate in Organ Performance from the University of Michigan, while continuing to perform around Europe and North America. Speaking of his new position, Oakes said: 'Fernand Létourneau's contribution to modern organ building in North America is indisputable and he can proudly point to a legacy of beautiful instruments, appreciative clients, and his stellar team. It is a privilege to see this exceptional company into its next 40 years.'

Létourneau Pipe Organs is a global organ builder based in Quebec, having designed and built 132 pipe organs for clients across the world. The company prides itself on its clean voicing, the sensitivity and responsiveness of its key actions and the quality of its construction. Past projects include instruments for Pembroke College, Oxford (UK), St Andrew's Anglican Cathedral, Sydney (Australia), and First Presbyterian Church, Greensboro (US). letourneauorgans.com

The London A Cappella Festival has announced that it will be taking a break in 2020, having presented an annual festival for the last 10 years. Replacing the event are two a cappella concerts in Jan, featuring The Swingles and The King's Singers. On 24 Jan, the two groups will present 'Vol. 1: Finding Harmony' and on 25 Jan they will perform 'Vol 2: Evolution'. The concerts will combine the styles of both groups, celebrating diversity and harmony. Tickets from £29.50-£44.50. londonacappellafestival.com



NEDINA NAZARALI

EVENTS

The International Society of Organbuilders (ISO) has announced its **31st World Congress of Organbuilders**, which will take place in Strasbourg from 23-29 Aug 2020. international-organbuilders.com

The year 2020 sees the Austrian capital launch **Vienna 2020: Capital of Music**. Entitled 'All Ears On', the programme celebrates the artists and institutions that make up the city's musical heritage.



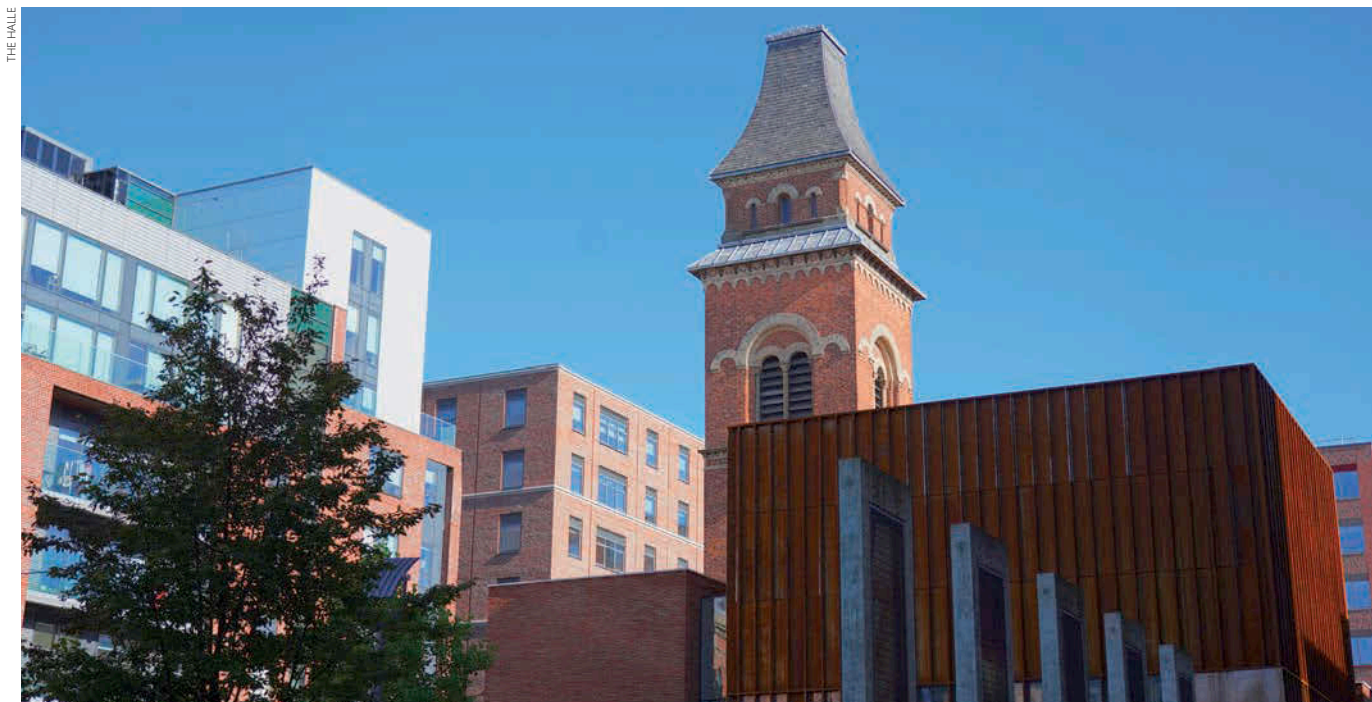
MARCE

▲ Vienna 2020: Capital of Music

Events, exhibitions and concerts will be taking place all year round, with a particular focus on Beethoven in his 250th anniversary year. musik2020.wien.info

Following her appointment as director of music and organist of Rochester Cathedral in Sep 2019, **Francesca Massey** gives the first organ recital of 2020 at Union Chapel, London, on 8 Jan. She will perform a selection of French music, including Litaize, Duruflé and Vierne. unionchapel.org.uk

EXPANDING HALLÉ



▲ The extension at Hallé St Peter's will create a rehearsal space and 'bring together the Hallé family under one roof', as well as provide a new facility for the community

A £6.6M EXTENSION AT HALLÉ ST PETER'S, the Onglesby Centre, opened in November. The three-storey Centre adds new facilities to the church in Manchester, including a double height rehearsal space, an interactive classroom for education work, and a café and bar open to the public.

Opened on 20 November, the Onglesby Centre was designed by Manchester-based architecture firm Stephenson Studio and was built to support the Hallé's ongoing commitment to music education and outreach work. This work ensures the provision of high-quality coaching for gifted individuals, as well as inclusive projects encouraging a wide range of children and adults to engage with music.

Hallé chief executive John Summers said, 'In its completed form, St Peter's will enable us to bring together the Hallé family under one

roof, and provide a state-of-the-art new facility for the community to use and enjoy.'

The opening celebrations included the reading of a specially commissioned poem by poet laureate Simon Armitage, performances by the Hallé Orchestra and Youth Choir, and outreach events such as a 'Singing Meet-up' run by Hallé Choral Conductors.

Hallé St Peter's has acted as the rehearsal and recording space for the Hallé's orchestras, choirs and ensembles since its opening by the Hallé's patron, HRH the Countess of Wessex, in 2013. The Hallé's education programme generates around 65 projects each year, reaching over 71,000 people, while its groups perform at the Bridgewater Hall, around the UK and internationally throughout the year. halle.co.uk

PREMIERES [RP = REGIONAL PREMIERE]

Iain Bell: Much to be Done

The Pink Singers/Hipkin

11 Jan, Cadogan Hall, London, UK

Phillip Cooke: The Mystery of Light

University of Aberdeen Chamber Choir/Paul

14 Jan, Elphinstone Hall, University of Aberdeen, UK

Ēriks Ešenvalds: Coruscatio

Männerstimmen Basel/Rudin

16 Jan, Elisabethankirche Basel, CH

Karl Jenkins: Miserere – Songs of Mercy and

Redemption [RP]

Distinguished Concerts Orchestra, Distinguished

Concerts Singers International/Griffith

20 Jan, Carnegie Hall, New York, US

Ēriks Ešenvalds: Late Autumn

Vancouver Chamber Choir/Washburn

24 Jan, Pacific Spirit United Church, Vancouver,

CA

Paul Ayres: I stand upon the seashore

Six Degrees Singers/Carlson

26 Jan, Hughes United Methodist Church,
Wheaton, Maryland, US

Cecilia McDowall: Brightest Star [RP]

Choir of Royal Holloway/Gough

29 Jan, St John's Smith Square, London, UK

Please email items for News and Letters to the Editor for publication in future issues to maggie.hamilton@markallengroup.com, or post to The Editor, Choir & Organ, Mark Allen Group, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, London SE24 0PB, UK.



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Life within life

During the 2019/20 academic year, Clare College, Cambridge, celebrates the 250th anniversary of the completion of its current Chapel. Director of music **Graham Ross** describes how the College's musical life has developed, and looks ahead to the 2020 New Music partnership with *Choir & Organ*

The second oldest college in Cambridge, Clare College was founded in 1326 by Lady Elizabeth de Clare. Music was given a prominent place in the life of the University from its earliest days, playing a central role in chapel liturgies. But although several of the Colleges made a chapel choir part of their original foundation, at Clare music appears to have had little prominence until the early 20th century. In particular, the activities of

students Cecil Sharp and Sabine Baring-Gould, and the incidental succession of musically active undergraduates, gave Clare music a sufficiently high profile to earn it an enthusiastic mention in the 1926 history of the College:

... those [Clare musicians] who show such direct, clean enthusiasm have become quite single-minded in the zeal of their discovery that art can bring the inestimable recognition of a life

created within life. If it is on its musical tradition that the College may most congratulate itself in reviewing its recent generations, it is in the degree of this kind of enthusiasm that the essence of that tradition lies, for it makes of its possessors real 'new world' types. Such men as Sharp and Denis Browne do not occur with perfunctory, calculable regularity; but awareness that a tradition has, somehow, gathered into being, and of the outstanding values in the nature of that tradition, may help to ensure unbroken continuity. ►

NICK RUTTER

▼ *Choir & Organ's* 2020 New Music partners: the Choir of Clare College, Cambridge



JOHN FABES SR. AFTER UNKNOWN ARTIST



FROM A PHOTO BY W. & D. DOWNIE



IMAGE PROVIDED BY CLARE COLLEGE ARCHIVES



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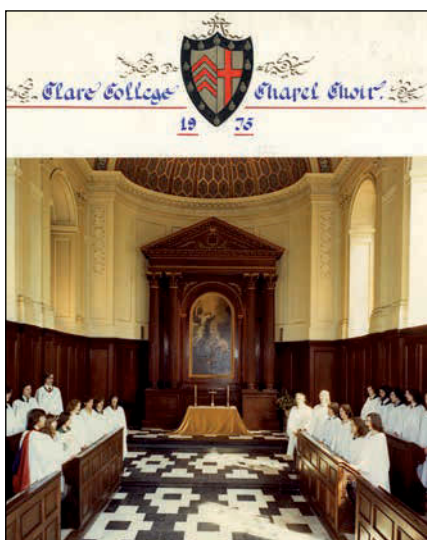


IMAGE PROVIDED BY CLARE COLLEGE ARCHIVES



IMAGE PROVIDED BY CLARE COLLEGE ARCHIVES



▲ Clare College movers and shakers: (top row) Lady Elizabeth de Clare, who founded the College in 1326; alumni Sabine Baring-Gould and Cecil Sharp collaborated to produce the 1905 publication *English Folk Songs for Schools* – Sharp's manuscripts were bequeathed to the College after his death; (second row) Clare College Chapel Choir in 1975 – the first mixed choir was formed in 1971; John Rutter, the College's first director of music, established a high level of singing, maintained by his successor, Timothy Brown (r)

◁ I am writing this on the day that no fewer than eight Clare undergraduates have been awarded University Instrumental Awards – for another consecutive year, more than any other Cambridge College – and five members of the Chapel Choir have been awarded principal positions in the University's two main orchestras. It seems that that 'unbroken continuity' still rings true.

Baring-Gould (of 'Onward, Christian Soldiers' fame) and Sharp were certainly both significant musical alumni: avid folk tune collectors, they collaborated for their seminal 1905 publication *English Folk Songs for Schools*. Sharp's manuscripts were then bequeathed to Clare after his death in 1924. But both men were at Clare when College

music – with the exception of those reading Mus. Bac. – was largely an amateur affair. Until the end of the second world war there was no music Fellow at Clare – indeed, the University only introduced the Music tripos in 1947. After that began a steady rise in the number of musicians university-wide, with regular applications from former National Youth Orchestra members.

The first music Fellow elected to Clare was Nicholas Temperley, in 1961. His role was principally academic, though he took some responsibility for the Choir and was involved in the installation of the current Beckerath organ. Until 1960, the choir's treble line was sung by local town boys. There are few published accounts of chapel music from that

time, but we know of a performance of Bach's *St John Passion* in 1930 from the College magazine, which stated that the performance 'at times reached quite a high level'! By the end of the second world war, choirmasters had been replaced by organ scholars, but, unlike today, they never overlapped, and each incumbent had to recruit and train the new choir from scratch. Some thrived in this environment, but others fared less well, with inevitable consequences for musical standards. In the 1960s it was felt that boys were being taken away from their local parish choirs, and without the benefit of a choir school the decision was taken to remove the treble line and make an ATB choir – as had happened down the road at Trinity College.

Numerous ATB arrangements in the choir library still survive today which bear witness to those years.

Perhaps Clare music's most significant moment came when the formerly all-male College became one of the first in Cambridge to admit female undergraduates, in 1972. This paved the way for the Chapel Choir to function once again as a complete SATB ensemble, and it was Temperley's successor,

of music in 1979 brought music at Clare to the forefront of College life. My own appointment as director of music in 2010 was only the third such appointment in the College's history, and much of the national and international success that Clare music enjoys is due to the work of my two illustrious predecessors, who need little introduction: John Rutter (1975-79), and Timothy Brown (1979-2010). Rutter established a consistently

pioneering decision was to shape Brown's extraordinary 31-year tenure in the post, and allow him to develop Clare's music-making to sit alongside established professional outfits in the UK, and, increasingly, overseas. In 2000 the Choir became the first Oxbridge mixed-voice choir to appear at the BBC Proms, performing Bach's *St John Passion* in the 250th anniversary year of Bach's death, conducted by former organ scholar Ivor Bolton. The College commissioned and premiered numerous works, including major works by John Tavener and Tarik O'Regan, and the College Music Society gained a reputation as one of the University's most active and ambitious, whose orchestras and ensembles continue to flourish to this day. Regular high-quality performances of major symphonic works and oratorios take place with conductors, soloists, instrumentalists and chorus drawn entirely from the Clare undergraduate community.

The activities that I have devoted my energies to have attempted to build on the work of my predecessors, including expanding the College music's international profile with more than 25 international tours in the last decade; broadening its repertoire with regular new commissions; establishing

Commissioning is a way to strive for continued musical excellence and revitalise the canon

the Purcell scholar Peter Dennison, who established the first mixed-voice choir at Clare in 1971, employing female volunteers from both Clare and other colleges. He made an impact on the Chapel Choir, though his tenure was brief – he returned to his native Australia in 1975 to accept a professorship. And so in 1975 the College appointed its first (non-stipendiary) director of music – a recent Clare graduate, called John Rutter...

A succession of music-loving Masters and Chapel Deans, the introduction of the mixed-voice choir, and the eventual appointment of a fully salaried director

high standard of service singing, and began forging important relationships with the BBC and recording labels – his 1978 *Carols from Clare* remains in the catalogue to this day. In taking the decision to focus his energies on composition, Rutter's departure in 1979 resulted in the College creating a College lectureship for a new Fellow in music who would both direct the choir and act as director of studies. Tim Brown's appointment led the way in Oxbridge, and subsequently many other Colleges followed suit by appointing directors of music to promote practical music-making. This

▼ Old Court, Clare College, from King's Bridge



DIMITRY TONONONG

CLARE COLLEGE

◁ a weekly Chapel webcast; founding partnerships with record label Harmonia mundi and Ikon Arts Management; and introducing Friends schemes and an Alumni Association, among others. Clare has boasted an almost unbroken run of student conductors who have held the position of the University Music Society's sole conducting scholar. In 2016 I appointed the College's first female organ scholar (some 690 years too late, in my opinion!), and many of my former

▼ Director of music Graham Ross, with the Choir today



NICK RUTTER

students who have since graduated have naturally become working colleagues and close friends – much as those from my own time as a Clare undergraduate have too. Clare continues to attract some of the brightest and musically hungry undergraduates to its humble (and beautiful) 18th-century Court. Its recent musical alumni (Norrington, Rutter, Kitchen, Bolton, Manze, How, Gowers, Egarr, Faultless, Ticciati, Manahan Thomas, Collon, to name but a very few) reads like a Who's Who of current musical landscapes: today's composers, conductors, instrumentalists, singers and musicologists – many of whom are not reading Music, of course – make so many of my working days at Clare positively beat with music from start to finish (and, alas, seemingly never-ending administration). It is an all-encompassing but hugely fulfilling role, which alongside my freelance activities as a conductor and composer has taken me around the world and introduced me to some extraordinary and wonderful people. All of this is achieved

with a large support network, and against ever increasingly challenging financial and administrative burdens. If music in an environment like Clare is to continue to survive and thrive in such a fractured world as ours, then commissioning new works is one such obvious way to strive for continued musical excellence and revitalise the canon. And in the academic year that the College celebrates the 250th anniversary of the completion of its current Chapel, it seems a perfect time to celebrate Clare's musical legacy by partnering with *Choir & Organ's* New Music series in creating six new commissions to take us into Clare's next musical chapter. I'm much looking forward to premiering the new works and introducing them to our congregations and audiences. Maybe they will come to play their own part in Clare's musical history in years to come. ■

Graham Ross is director of music and Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge, and a guest composer and conductor of many ensembles worldwide.



NICK RUTTER




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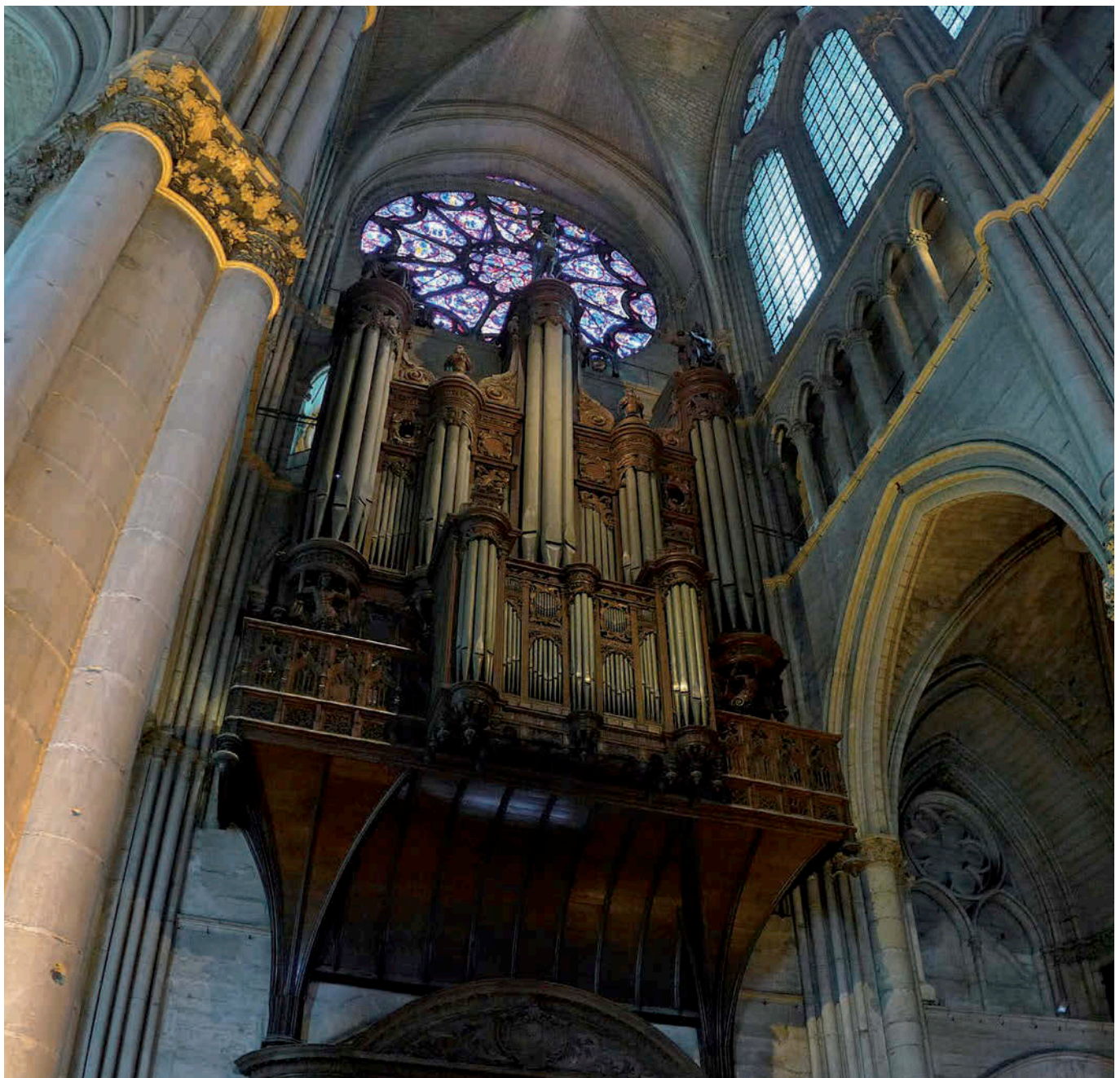
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Performance review

David Ponsford opens our new series on performance practice by delving into the 'vigorously disputed' music of the French baroque

part 1 Nicolas de Grigny: *Premier livre d'orgue*



LOUIS-KENZO CAHIER

The *Premier livre d'orgue* (1699) by Nicolas de Grigny (1672–1703), organist at Reims Cathedral from 1697, represents the summit of French baroque organ composition. This is revealed by his command of large-scale structures, the prevalence of five-part fugues using the most beautiful tone colours on the organ, his harmonic language, successful incorporation of the latest instrumental, dance and vocal styles, the plethora of expressive detail and the sheer scope of his musical imagination. De Grigny's importance was recognised by both J.S. Bach and J.G. Walther, who made manuscript copies between 1709 and 1712. These three sources are the basis for all modern editions.¹

However, the original 1699 print was flawed with wrong titles, incorrect notes, misplaced accidentals, poorly-positioned ornaments, mistaken note values, misplaced and absent ties, and corrections made

Nivers, Lebègue, Gigault and François Couperin, de Grigny's Mass was based on the *Missa cunctipotens genitor Deus* (now Mass IV, but Mass I in de Grigny's time). An appropriate source for the plainchant, edited by Nivers, is the *Graduale Romanum* (1697).²

In Great Britain, the absence of organs in French baroque style is one reason why this repertoire is relatively under-performed. In France there are no surviving large-scale French organs from de Grigny's time, and the only sufficiently large organs date from a later period.³ Only the organ case in Reims Cathedral survives. However, the French baroque organ was remarkably consistent in design, and the specification of Alexandre Thierry's organ at St Louis-des-Invalides (1679-87), played by de Grigny's teacher Lebègue, cannot have been too different to the Reims organ:⁴

In the absence of an autograph, all editions comprise a sequence of editorial choices, which are acts of interpretation

without the errors being excised. These errors, uncorrected in the 1711 edition, undermine faith in the original print. Bach's copy is mostly accurate to the original, but in Walther's copy (probably derived from Bach's) many emendations were made, perhaps to 'correct' de Grigny's original according to more rationalist principles and to update the source for German organists. These copies, therefore, cannot be relied upon to reflect accurately de Grigny's intentions, although they inform us about German reactions to French idioms and German attitudes to making copies generally.

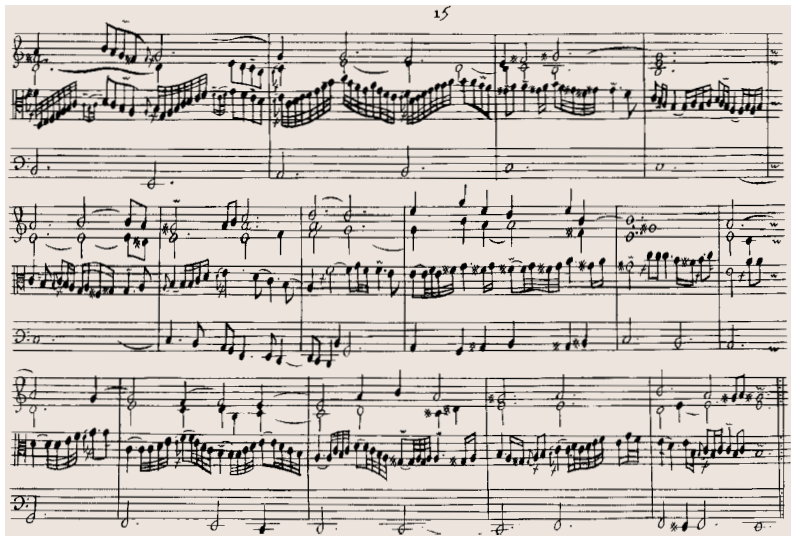
The plethora of errors, together with Bach's and Walther's alterations, has led editors to different conclusions. Without de Grigny's (lost) autograph, all editions necessarily comprise a sequence of editorial choices, which are acts of interpretation. The most vigorously disputed 'errors' occur in bar 35 of the *Récit de tierce en taille* (4th couplet, Gloria), where at the climax of this expressive piece, notes 2-8 of the solo line may have been printed one note too high, which was recognised and 'corrected' by Walther.

De Grigny's Mass and five hymn-suites followed the traditional *alternatim* practice, in which each sentence of the Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, Agnus Dei and the hymns was divided alternately between solo organ couplets and sung plainchant probably led by a serpent. The Credo was sung throughout, and there were three places for solo music to cover liturgical ceremonies: the *Offertoire*, *Elévation* and Communion. Together with organ Masses by

However, de Grigny makes no mention of the Voix humaine, and, in addition, a Pedal Flute 4 and Clairon 4 were probably present. Also likely were a Pos/GO coupler and two tremulants: a *Tremblant à vent perdu* and a gentler *Tremblant doux*. De Grigny did not include instructions for registration, but advice by Lebègue relating to each genre – Plein jeu, Fugue, Duo, Trio, Récit, Fond d'orgue and Grands jeux – is relevant, as is that of de Grigny's contemporary Boyvin, organist at Rouen Cathedral.⁵ ▷

◀ The organ in Reims Cathedral, where de Grigny was organist. Only the case survives from de Grigny's time; however, as French baroque organs were consistent in design, the specification of Alexandre Thierry's organ at St Louis-des-Invalides (below) is likely to be similar to that of the original Reims organ

GRAND ORGUE		POSITIF		RÉCIT	
<i>CD-c3, 48 notes</i>		<i>CD-c3, 48 notes</i>		<i>c1-c3, 25 notes</i>	
Montre	16	Montre	8	Cornet	V
Bourdon	16	Bourdon	8	Trompette	8
Montre	8	Prestant	4		
Bourdon	8	Flûte	4	ÉCHO	
Prestant	4	Nasard	2 ² / ₃	<i>c-c3, 37 notes</i>	
Flûte	4	Doublette	2	Bourdon	8
Grosse Tierce	3 ¹ / ₅	Tierce	1 ³ / ₅	Flûte	4
Nasard	2 ² / ₃	Larigot	1 ¹ / ₃	Nasard	2 ² / ₃
Doublette	2	Fourniture	III	Quarte	2
Quarte de Nasard	2	Cymbale	II	Tierce	1 ³ / ₅
Tierce	1 ³ / ₅	Cromorne	8	Cymbale	II
Fourniture	V	Vox humaine	8	Cromorne	8
Cymbale	IV				
Cornet	V	PÉDALE			
Trompette	8	<i>AA, BB-f, 20 notes</i>			
Clairon	4	Flûte	8		
Vox humaine	8	Trompette	8		



a)



c)



◀ A controversial issue is whether the *tirasse*, a Grand Orgue/Pedal coupler, was included in the Reims organ, and whether it was intended in pieces such as the *Récit de tierce en taille* (4th couplet, Gloria). Here, with the prescribed 16ft on the GO and an 8ft pedal Flute, the *tirasse* is needed to avoid several ungrammatical second inversion chords (but some disagree).

French ornament tables during the baroque period were the most complex and sophisticated in Europe. De Grigny did not include an ornament table, but from the music two categories are evident: small-scale ornament symbols (trills and mordents), and more elaborate ornaments written out in full. In addition, Lebègue's *coulé* (a slide between intervals of a third) and *harpegement* (arpeggio) were clearly part of the expressive resources, and there are occasions when they add grace to the music. The abstract nature of ornament tables, the limited range of symbols with different terminologies, and the potential variety of musical interpretations should warn players against a too-literal execution of any particular ornament as printed in the tables.⁶

▶ Four versions of the *Récit de tierce en taille*: a) the 1699 print; b) J.S. Bach's copy; c) J.G. Walther's copy; d) the new edition by David Ponsford

d)

Fond d'orgue

Tierce

Pedale

13

Dominus Deus. Rex caelestis...

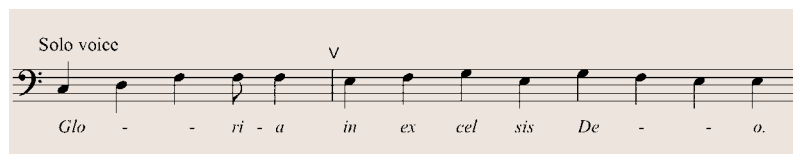
One of the most contentious issues is *notes inégales*.⁷ Despite about 50 contemporaneous sources, which only describe the context and the simple relationship between time signature and note values, they were intended for amateurs and children, and hardly prescriptive for professional organist-composers. A wider range of factors needs to be taken into account. For de Grigny, these include influences of dance (particularly minuets and gavottes), Italian string music and sung declamation. A major concern was (and is) the distinction between French and Italian styles. Couperin's comment in *L'art de toucher le clavecin* (1717) that 'The Italians write their music in the true values in which they have conceived it', was confirmed by J.-J. Rousseau: 'In Italian music all the quavers are always equal, unless they are marked *pointées*. But in French music one only makes quavers exactly equal in bars of four beats; in all the others one always dots them a little unless they are marked *croches égales*' (*Dictionnaire*, 1768). Some slurs and dots (which Couperin calls *coulés*) in de Grigny's *Duo* (3rd couplet, Gloria) and *Trio* (8th couplet, Gloria) over descending conjunct quavers may well signal short-long *inégalité*, as advised in the ornament table from Couperin's first book of harpsichord music (1713):

Coulés, of which the dots indicate that the second note in each beat should be more leaned upon.

Further research into these topics will stimulate a greater awareness of sources (and therefore the limitations of modern editions) and performance practices, which enhance knowledge and understanding, leading to more authoritative performances that have the potential to reveal unparalleled beauties in this wonderful music. ■ David Ponsford's new edition of de Grigny's *Premier livre d'orgue* is published by, and available from, *Ut Orpheus, Bologna* (2019): utorpheus.com.

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3. A recording of de Grigny's complete *Premier livre d'orgue* (with plainchant) on Sarlat Cathedral organ (1752) can be



heard in vol. 5 of 'French Organ Music from the Golden Age' (2CDs, Nimbus NI 6342 & 6343, 2017), played by David Ponsford.

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6. For a discussion of French baroque ornaments, see Ch. 4, 'Ornaments', in Ponsford's *French Organ Music in the Reign of Louis XIV* (Cambridge University Press, 2011; paperback edition, 2016), pp. 57-89.
7. For a discussion on notes inégales, see Ch. 3, 'The conventions of notes inégales', *French Organ Music in the Reign of Louis XIV*, pp.25-56.

▲ The opening of the Gloria from de Grigny's Mass, which follows the traditional *alternatim* pattern of each sung sentence being followed by a solo organ couplet

David Ponsford is an organist, harpsichordist, and author of *French Organ Music in the Reign of Louis XIV*. He is currently recording for Nimbus Records.

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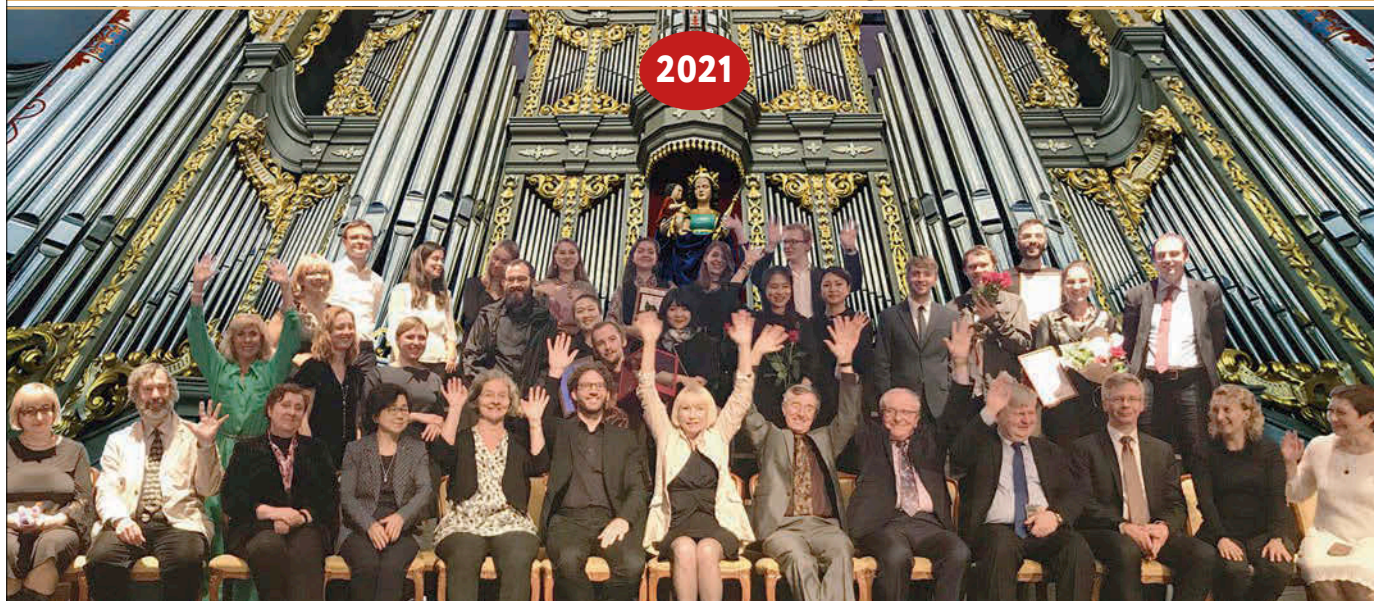
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▲ A 64-strong choir will take to the open-air stage against the breathtaking backdrop of the Ammer valley

A heavenly host

Performed without fail every ten years by the inhabitants of Oberammergau, the Passion Play unites music and theatre in a tradition that dates back to 1633. **Harriet Clifford** talks to music manager Markus Zwink to uncover the role of the choir and soloists in this epic theatrical undertaking. IMAGES COURTESY OF OBERAMMERGAU PASSION PLAY 2020

There is something uncanny about the streets of Oberammergau, a Bavarian town of 5,000 inhabitants in the upper part of the Ammer valley. It could be the intricately painted archways and borders fronting the large houses, designed to look three-dimensional while lying flat against the brickwork. It could be the watchful carvings of Saint Florian adorning the doorways, still resolutely warding off any signs of fire from the once-wooden houses. It could even be the way that each house has been discreetly split down the middle, with both halves almost symmetrical, save for the height of a windowsill or the size of a door, indicating the unequal levels of wealth of the families within. But aside from these idiosyncrasies, there is something much more striking to

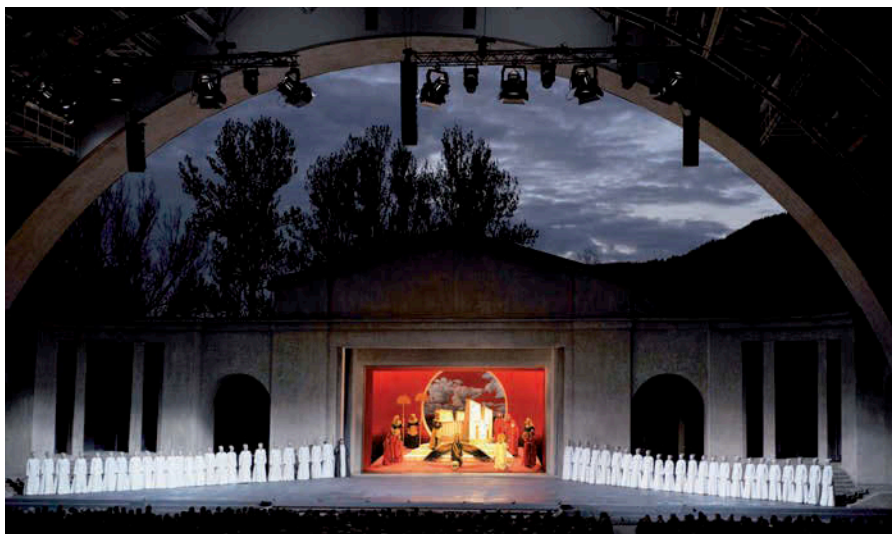
the observant eye, used to the encounters of a professional commuter town or city: more than half the men have long, freely growing hair on their heads and faces.

On Ash Wednesday 2019, the 'Hair and Beard Decree' was actioned in Oberammergau, applying to all the adult men (excluding those playing the Roman soldiers) selected to act in the town's world-renowned Passion Play, which runs in its ten-yearly cycle from May to October 2020.

Why the Passion Play, and why here? In 1632, a man from a neighbouring village brought the plague to the town, leading the inhabitants to make a pledge to God the following year: they vowed to perform a Passion Play portraying the life of Jesus once in every ten years if their lives were spared.

The record books state that 'not a single person perished' since the vow was made, and the town continues the tradition to this day, now in every year ending with '0', having produced the first play in 1634.

To be part of the play, whether as an actor, a musician in the orchestra, a soloist or a member of the choir, a person must have lived in Oberammergau for at least 20 years. The exceptions to the rule are schoolchildren, who are allowed to perform in the play from a young age, filling the stage to wave palm leaves as Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey. The play's director Christian Stückl, the stage and costumes director Stefan Hageneier, and the music manager Markus Zwink were all born in Oberammergau, completing a remarkable line-up of artistic talent – a talent >



▲ The chorus brings the *tableaux vivants* to life, drawing parallels between the Old and the New Testaments



▲ In 2020, Zwink hopes to blend the music and acting scenes together; for example, as Jesus enters Jerusalem

▼ The music both 'touches the heart' and allows for reflection in between acted scenes of high emotion



◁ which is nurtured in the children of the town from their early years. The number of residents involved in the play in all manner of capacities now reaches over 2,000, almost half of the town's population.

Zwink makes it clear that this approach to filling the 55 orchestra seats and 64 choir positions is far from a desperate scramble to meet the high standards required by the play, which is performed to 4,700 international visitors each afternoon. Rather, the town is overflowing with talent, and the performers are brought together each day from a pool of 110 musicians and singers respectively. Only a few less commonly played instruments (such as the second oboe) are sourced from elsewhere, to ensure that the quality of the music remains watertight.

The auditions for the choir were held in October 2018, requiring each candidate to take part in a week of casting, singing out of sight of the jury behind a curtain, so that, as Zwink explains, 'no one can manipulate anything'. While the singers are mainly amateurs, several of the 15 soloists are professionals, including Zwink's wife, Gabriele Weinfurter-Zwink, who is a contralto in the Bavarian Radio Choir.

Running for two of the five hours of the play, the music largely serves to explain the connections between the Old and the New Testaments, alongside the *tableaux vivants* – colourful stills displayed on the stage throughout the play, positioning the story of Jesus in relation to Old Testament events. Brought into the Passion Play in 1811, the music is based on the compositions of



Rochus Dedler (1779-1822), but is 'always in flow', with additions from Zwink and others shaping the sound over the years. It was initially composed for an orchestra of 12, plus 12-16 singers, but when the play was relocated from the original cemetery to a larger stage in 1830, the musicians were too few to be heard. In addition, the music composed by Dedler lasted eight hours, so a number of the *tableaux* have since been cut, leaving 12 opportunities for musical reflection in the form of arias, soloist ensembles and choral pieces.

Zwink explains the importance of these 'meditation points', which serve to recount the story in a different way and tap into the audience's emotions on a deeper level. Anton Burkhart, who played Jesus in 2000, Caiaphas in 2010 and who will play Joseph of Arimathea in 2020, agrees on the significance of the music, saying, 'Without the music, the Passion Play would not be what it is.' In 2020, Zwink hopes to blend the music and the acting scenes together in a way that hasn't

an immersive, surround-sound effect that fills the huge, partially open-air theatre. The choir sings a cappella on a few occasions, but most of the singing is accompanied by the orchestra.

Discussing the impact of the music on the audience, Zwink says, 'I think we should tell the story in our own way and see how it moves them. I can't direct that.' Frederik Mayet, who will return in 2020 to play Jesus for the second time, feels that 'the music sometimes touches the heart immediately', in a way that an acted scene may not. Mayet explains, 'The Passion Play is something that's very much alive. Christian [Stück] and Markus [Zwink] are always thinking, "How can we reach the audience today?"' This is a question that is answered through both the theatrical and musical decisions made on stage.

It seems remarkable that such a large-scale production can be presented to a standard warranting international attention by such a small town. Mayet acknowledges,

'We should tell the story in our own way and see how it moves them' – Marcus Zwink

been done before, although he admits that until rehearsals with the choir began on 18 October, he was uncertain about the form this ambition would take.

The text sung by the choir and soloists is based on words originally written for Dedler's music, but has been in flux throughout the history of the Passion Play – a 'work in progress of many people', as described by Zwink, who has written parts of it himself. He explains that the words sung by the soloists are the most significant, as they are easier to understand and help tell the story in a more explicit manner – although for those in the audience who don't speak German, there is only a written translation in the form of a hefty textbook.

Despite the 'tricky' task of conducting both the orchestra and the choir from within the deep orchestra pit, Zwink finds working with such a large group of musicians to be a 'great pleasure', and uses the expansive stage to create a sense of 'singing in many places'. He envisages spreading the choir across the space, sometimes with a smaller group of singers behind the stage, to create

'People are surprised when they come here, because the quality is high. We only have 5,000 inhabitants and we try to bring out the best.' This is done, in part, through commitment to music and theatre education in the intervening years. Zwink runs two boys' choirs, while his wife has two girls' choirs, and there are also youth choirs, adult choirs and church choirs in the town, all of which present 'possibilities to educate new singers'. Does this suggest that 'anyone can do it' if given the resources? Zwink replies that 'they have to have aims', which appears to correspond with the drive clearly visible within those involved in the play.

During the intervening nine years, the Passion Play theatre is used to host operas, Shakespeare plays and other Biblical productions, although the size of the audience is significantly reduced. These performances enable the community to come together artistically, sharpen talent and ensure that the town is ready to welcome the world to their theatre each decade.

There is clearly a strong religious motivation in the roots of the Oberammergau



▲ Music manager Markus Zwink finds 'great pleasure' in working with a large chorus

Passion Play, based as it is on a vow made to God in the setting of a traditionally Catholic town in southern Germany. Yet Mayet doesn't feel that people who live there are necessarily more religious – rather, that they are more open to discussion about religion. While some visitors from around the world treat it as a pilgrimage, he explains, 'If you're an open-minded person, even if you have a different religion, you can take something with you.' Zwink does not think it is important that audience members leave being 'more religious', but instead that they feel moved and part of the special history of the play in Bavarian culture.

Alongside wooden carvings, painted houses and unruly facial hair, the music in the Passion Play is part of this culture in Oberammergau, a town where people remain generation after generation to secure their role in the story of Jesus's life. It is, however, somewhat telling that 200 men applied to play one of the 60 (beardless) Roman soldiers in 2020. As Burkhart puts it, not everyone can afford to 'look that wild'. ■

There will be 103 performances of the Passion Play between 16 May and 4 October 2020. Harriet Clifford was a guest of the German National Tourist Office and Passionsspiele Oberammergau. For further information, please see germany.travel, visitberlin.de/en or passionsspiele-oberammergau.de



Olkusz renaissance

In the first of a series of articles on 17th- and 18th-century organ building traditions in Poland, **Krzysztof Urbaniak** describes the recently restored instrument at Olkusz, one of the best-preserved renaissance organs in Europe

Europe's organ landscapes have been subject to systematic research since at least the 18th century. This has resulted in a broad range of publications about, and considerable collective knowledge of, the French, English, German, Dutch, Italian, Iberian and Swedish organ idioms, and often their regional variations. Despite its impressive density of historic instruments and almost 1,000 years of organ history, Poland, like other eastern European countries, remained mostly excluded from this trend. This was partly the result of the clear language border between the east and west, but also a consequence of Poland's complicated geopolitical history.

The Hans Hummel and Georg Nitrowski organ of Olkusz occupies a special position in this context, being the oldest playable, restored Polish organ, as well as one of the best preserved 16ft organs of the late renaissance in Europe. All comparable organs from the southern German tradition, especially in the region of Nuremberg where Hummel was probably educated in the circles of the Cuntz family, have been destroyed, as well as the great organs of Gdańsk, where Georg Nitrowski was active from 1649. The organ of Olkusz therefore remains the sole witness to a tradition stretching from today's Slovakia to the Polish Baltic coast. Nevertheless, the instrument and its builders are linked to wider European organ schools. Sweelinck pupil Paul Siefert must have known Georg Nitrowski through the latter's 1652 restoration of the main organ at St Mary's in Gdańsk, where Siefert was the principal organist. In addition, the Hummel/Nitrowski organ at Levoča – twin sister of the instrument in Olkusz – was presided over by

one Johann Plotz who had been educated by Sweelinck pupil Samuel Scheidt.

The organ's history began in 1611, when the city authorities signed a contract with Hans Hummel (c.1580-1630) of Kraków. Investigations at the State Archive in Levoča (Slovakia) and at the W. Stefanyk Scientific Library in Lviv (Ukraine) confirm that the instrument was built with six stops more than originally planned. As Hummel writes in a letter from 1616, this was in response to the city council's desire to put Olkusz on the map. They were advised in their endeavours by the organist of St Mary's Church in

in Levoča – was accused of misappropriating church property, and summoned to appear before the court in Kraków. Crushed by the burden of responsibility, Hummel died – probably from an act of suicide – in Levoča in 1630. His employers in Levoča, Kraków and Olkusz were thus obliged to find an organ builder who could complete the unfinished instruments. This was Georg Nitrowski (c.1610-after 1680), who would later found a renowned dynasty of at least three generations of prolific organ builders active throughout the First Republic's territory in the 17th and early 18th centuries. Documents held by the

The Olkusz organ and its builders take their place in the circles of the first and second generation Sweelinck pupils

Kraków, the Revd Sebastian Zielonka. Hummel's reputation prompted two further commissions of near-identical size: the restructuring of the organ above the pulpit in Zielonka's church, and the new instrument for St James's Church in Levoča. This was when the problems began: the considerable distance between the towns in question (as well, perhaps, as the death of his four-year-old son) meant that Hummel struggled to organise his workshop, which (as shown by inscriptions discovered in the Olkusz organ) employed an international group of workers. This is no doubt why the Olkusz instrument was poorly received in 1618. After this setback, Hummel interrupted work several times on each contracted organ, changing his place of residence on each occasion. As a result, both St Mary's in Kraków and the Olkusz parish decided to take legal action. After the intervention of the Polish king, Zygmunt III Vasa, Hummel – then resident

National Archives in Kraków, drawn from the City of Olkusz's records, confirm that Georg Nitrowski was educated by Hans Hummel, which may explain his appointment. His training began as a journeyman in c.1624 and finished five years later as a fully independent organ builder. He would go on to work with Hummel for another year on the Levoča instrument. The aforementioned Olkusz documents suggest that Nitrowski was charged with installing five incomplete stops, to work on 'certain unfinished portions' of the organ and to bring the whole to a proper state of 'harmony'. Nitrowski's work in Olkusz was positively received in 1631, the work finally signed off by the aforementioned Revd Sebastian Zielonka. Nitrowski made some final corrections in 1633.

Hummel and Nitrowski's Olkusz organ was indicative of a rich musical life, traces of which are documented in the church's surviving account books. The sponsors' >

◀ The Olkusz organ with its grand musicians' balconies and the pair of Tympan pipes mounted on the adjacent columns



Basilica Minor St Andrew's, Olkusz, Poland

HANS HUMMEL AND GEORG
NITROWSKI (1611-33)

MANUAL

(C, D, E, F, G, A-g², a²)

Principal*	8
Fleit wielki*	8
Salcinal*	8
Octawa*	4
Fleit octawný*	4
Spilfleit octawný*	4
Quinta*	3
Quindecima*	2
Gembshorn*	2
Mixtura VII*	2
Cymbał*	V
Puzan	8

POZYTYW

(C, D, E, F, G, A-g², a²)

Principal*	4
Quintathena*	8
Fleit octawný*	4
Octawa*	2
Flecik mnieiszý*	2
Scadek	1
Mixtura III*	1
Cymbał*	III
Kromport	8
Salamaia	4
<i>Tympan (drum stop)*</i>	
<i>Gwiazdy (stars)*</i>	
<i>Słowik (nightingale)</i>	
<i>8 wedge bellows</i>	

PEDAŁ

(C, D, E, F, G, A - d¹, e¹)

Principal*	16
Octawa*	8
Fleit wielki*	8
Quinta	6
Quindecima*	4
Fleit octawný*	4
Mixtura VI*	4
Pomorth	16
Cornet	2

* original or partly original stops

Tuning: quarter-comma meantone

a¹ = c.480 Hz

◀ The conservative compass of the manuals (extending only to a²) contrasts with the opulent pedal compass, extending to e³

◀ aspirations for the church's music are evidenced by the two expansive musicians' galleries, located either side of the organ. The Hummel/Nitrowski organ was not the only instrument in the church – archival materials also prove the existence of at least one positive organ and a regal whose bellows were repaired by Hummel's journeymen. The main organ probably survived the second half of the 18th century without any major changes, although it was repaired by, among others, Friedrich Wilhelm Scheffler of Brzeg. Only at the beginning of the 19th century did damage to the church, caused partly by high humidity, make its mark on the organ's condition. Church council records surviving from this period document, among other things, the complete ruin of the eight bellows.

The first major work on the instrument was performed in 1839 by Jan Słotwiński of Kraków. He restored the organ, at the same time removing certain pipes from the mixtures and using the material gained thereby to fill in gaps in other stops. The end of the 19th century brought the removal of the eight bellows. Following minor repairs in the early 20th century, repairs were undertaken by the Stefan Krukowski company of Piotrków Trybunalski in 1945. From that time onward, the organ's condition gradually deteriorated; in 1967, plans were even made to replace it entirely. However, increasing awareness of the value of historic organs resulted in the Olkusz instrument becoming a focus of interest for musicologists, organists and organ builders by the late 1960s. Thanks to the considerable commitment of the church and local authorities, state conservation services and private individuals, a detailed restoration project was initiated, which would last, on and off, from 1972 to 1992. The project was carried out by the organ workshop of the State Historical Monuments Conservation Company of Kraków. The documentation, hugely labour-intensive and encompassing several dozen volumes, is exemplary. However, the shortcomings of this restoration, in the light of the most recent archival and Europe-wide organological research, became evident after 2000. Of particular significance were the activities of the Baltisches Orgel Centrum e.V. of Stralsund (Germany), a distinguished association in the field of Polish and



▲ The principal ranks within each division follow the same scaling, closely related to that of the façade pipes

German organ restoration. In collaboration with the Olkusz authorities, as well as the conservatories of Kraków, Łódź, Amsterdam and Hamburg, a wealth of information was successfully gathered from Polish, Slovak, Ukrainian and German archives, as well as from the examination of several dozen instruments from the appropriate sphere of reference. A restoration plan was drawn up to address those issues left open by the previous restoration. These included the reconstruction of the eight wedge bellows (typical of the 17th-century Kraków school with six folds), positive case doors, the reeds and the instrument's temperament as well as the restoration of the original colour scheme, both of the organ case and adjacent balconies; and above all, a detailed inventory of the pipework, together with the restoration of the pipes' original lengths and locations within the instrument. Throughout, the work was carried out under the close supervision of the Małopolskie Province Historical Building Conservator in Kraków, and guided by an international group of experts comprising myself as team leader, Prof. Dr Marcin Szelest (Kraków), Prof. Pieter van Dijk (Amsterdam/Hamburg), Dr Dorothea Schröder (Cuxhaven) and Martin Rost (Stralsund). The restoration was carried out by Flentrop Orgelbouw (Zaandam, the Netherlands); the organ case and balconies were restored by the workshop of Marcin Chmielewski (Kraków).

The tonal concept of the Olkusz organ is typical for the southern Polish organ-building school, as developed within the partly German- and partly Polish-speaking circles around Hummel. It is characterised by the significant independence of each of the organ's divisions as well as a rather broad palette of contrasting sound-colours. All the pipework is of metal, the inner pipes made of almost pure lead taken from Olkusz's mines. Only the façade pipes, cymbals and resonators of the Salamaia 4ft and Cornet 2ft contain c.40 per cent tin. This choice of materials was later continued by the Nitrowski family.

The main division of the organ – Manual – has two wind-chests placed symmetrically on either side of the central pedal division, housed on a single, large wind-chest. The 'chair' organ – Pozytyw – with its single, compact wind-chest is located in the traditional position on the balcony's balustrade. This basic layout, probably developed by Hummel, would later become the standard model of the Nitrowski family, recreated many times in the second half of the 17th century. All principal ranks within a single division of the organ have the same scaling, repeating rather closely that of the façade pipes. The plenum of each manual division is crowned by a typical Polish Cymbal stop. The rather extraordinary construction of these sees a randomly tuned group of tiny pipes, sitting on a common pipe foot, assigned to each key. There is no differentiation in pitch between the lowest keys and the highest. These cymbals combine well with virtually any other stops, but in some instruments are activated together with the mixture by means of a common knob. A contrasting family is provided by the exceptionally wide-scaled chimney flutes 8ft, 4ft and 2ft, equipped with soldered tops – a Polish speciality until c.1750. The conical flutes, Spilfleit octawný 4ft and Gembshorn 2ft differ slightly in their constructions and scaling, the Spilfleit being narrower and more conical. A very important stop, present in almost every Polish instrument since the final decades of the 16th century, is the tapered Salicinal 8ft, composed of thick-walled lead pipes, slow of speech and mixing well with all the other stops of the organ, even the VII-rank mixture. The Quintathena 8ft of the positive division consists of narrow-scaled, stopped pipes, unlike the Scadek 1ft, which consists of ▶

Back to basics – the restoration process

A couple of weeks before the restoration began, we were introduced to the Olkusz organ via a photo presentation, so that we knew a little of what to expect on arrival. The looks of incredulity on the faces of my two colleagues (with more than 70 years' experience between them) told me this was going to be a special project.

The chimney flutes are extraordinarily wide. The tapered string stop *Salicónal* (one of the earliest in existence) stands fully 8ft tall, supported only by an unusually high pipe-rack. As if sheltering from these monstrous pipes, the tiny Polish cymbals – five miniature pipes of random length jammed into a single, shared foot – are positioned *underneath* these racks.

The key action for the *Manual* disperses laterally not through a rollerboard, as one might expect, but through a system of squares turning on a large, angled board mounted underneath the wind-chests. The heavy-duty stop knobs are connected to metres of heavy, hand-forged, cast iron stop-rods and trundles.

My main role in this three-year restoration project was to document the historic pipework. Each pipe was assessed against a list of up to 40 variable parameters, ranging from the basic lengths, widths and thicknesses, to metal alloys, material properties and even characteristics of the soldering seams. In addition, the 17th-century handwritten inscriptions documenting each pipe's original speaking note were recorded in thousands of photographs. These inscriptions were essential in the reconstruction of the original 1611-30 specification, since many pipes had previously been moved around inside the organ, cut shorter, or lengthened, altering their scaling in the process.

Painstaking analysis of all this data helped us to identify and return the historic pipes to their original positions on the wind-chests. Pipes could be grouped together based on minute differences of scaling; we were able to identify patterns showing that the Pedal division was slightly wider scaled than the *Manual*, which in turn was slightly wider than the *Pożytyw*. Thereafter, we divided pipes into subcategories and sub-subcategories, based on the finest of details. For example, pipes standing closer to the edges of the soundboards were visibly different in colour to those buried in the heart of the organ – the varying levels of air circulation meant that the almost pure lead had oxidised faster in some than others. The smallest of disparities in the handwritten inscriptions allowed us even to distinguish between pipe makers in Hummel/Nitrowski's workshops, helping to identify which pipes were made together. Fascinating work!

The decisions reached as a result of this research might have little noticeable consequence for the final sound of the restored organ, but we were determined to do everything we could to bring the organ as close as possible to its original state. When the restored pipes were finally reunited with the wind-chests (themselves also meticulously examined and restored, along with the key and stop actions and wind system), an overwhelmingly beautiful sound-picture emerged. This instrument, so unique and full of charm, deserved nothing less than the huge efforts my colleagues and I poured into it.

Ross Luescher is a Scottish organ builder who has worked for Flentrop Orgelbouw since 2016.



FLENTROP ORGELBOUW

▲ The reconstructed wedge bellows have six folds in 17th-century Krakówian style



JACOB GARBAZ

▲ Console detail with distinctive medal stop handles

▼ The remarkable Cymbal stops have groups of randomly tuned, tiny pipes mounted on a single pipe foot



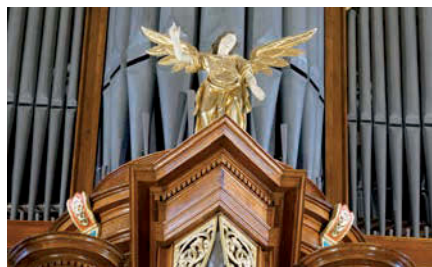
FLENTROP ORGELBOUW

◀ wide-scaled open pipes. The reeds in Olkusz are reconstructions based on well-preserved exemplars from the closely related organ in the monastery church of Wąchock (c.1650, II/24). The Pomorth 16ft and Puzan 8ft are located on a clamp at the rear of the wind-chest on which are mounted shared boots with holes in the side aligned with those of the sliders. These shared boots are hollowed out from above for the insertion of the individual, turned blocks. This construction is typical for the Hummel/Nitrowski school. The tone channels of the wind-chests are equipped with wind dividers for each stop, as in several Austrian organs of the early 17th century. The wind-chest of the Manual has two pallets per key, connected via a complicated iron mechanism. The Tympan – a drum stop – consists of two open 16ft pipes located on two pillars next to the organ balcony and connected to the wind system by means of two long wooden trunks passing under the floor and through the middle of the stone pillars. The organ's actions, wind-chests, forged iron stop knobs and keyboard frame date back to the first half of the 17th century. The very conservative compass of the manual keyboards (C, D, E, F, G, A – g², a²) contrasts with the unusually large compass of the pedal board (C, D, E, F, G, A – d¹, e¹). The organ is tuned in quarter-comma meantone.

The restoration of the remarkable renaissance organ in Olkusz has left us with an extraordinary resource, not just for use in the liturgy, but also in concerts, recordings and masterclasses. ■

Dr Krzysztof Urbaniak is professor of organ and head of the Institute of Harpsichord, Organ, Sacred Music and Early Instruments at the Bacewicz Academy of Music in Łódź as well as a multi award-winning organist. From 2013-16 he was an organ expert for the Polish Ministry of Culture.

▼ The organ case was restored in the workshop of Marcin Chmielewski



JAKUB GARAŃCZ

ROB SHIRET



Freestyle BY GRAEME KAY

A unique surround-sound experience

It was finally the UK's turn to experience the much-discussed phenomenon which is Jean Guillou's *La révolte des orgues*. Scored originally for nine organs and percussion, the work was premiered in Landsberg, Germany, in 2007; in the five succeeding years there were a further six performances in Germany, France and Italy, all of them conducted by Johannes Skudlik. And Skudlik was again in charge for the British premiere which took place, in the presence of the composer's widow Suzanne, on 20 November 2019, thanks to a collaboration between the Royal College of Organists and Viscount Classical Organs.

Westminster Cathedral proved to be the ideal venue for a programme billed as a 'Nine-Organ Extravaganza': there were convenient galleries on which to place the speakers for the electronic instruments dotted around the vast, open central space; percussionist Hélène Colombotti (a fixture of *La révolte* since the 2007 premiere) and conductor Skudlik were placed centrally, the audience framed by the cathedral's magnificent Grand and Choir organs.

A slightly gimmicky start in which Bach's BWV565 was shared around all the organs, phrase by phrase, proved that an electronic instrument is only as good as its speakers and that pipe organ sound remains unmistakable. Much more successful was Bach's Vivaldi transcription, BWV 1065, for four harpsichords, here performed by an international roster of top organists including Peter Stevens, Winfried



SIMON JACOBS/RCO

▲ Westminster Cathedral – scene of *La révolte*

Bönig, Bernhard Buttmann and Hansjörg Albrecht at the Viscount organs, and Jürgen Geiger at the Grand Organ with his own arrangement of the orchestral part. Bönig at the Grand Organ, and Geiger at the Choir Organ performed a double organ improvisation, and Colombotti was introduced performing the insistent side-drum part in Pierre Cochereau's *Boléro sur un thème de Charles Raquet*, as Hansjörg Albrecht, at the Grand Organ, was gradually joined by all the Viscounts to deliver Cochereau's characteristic piece in full surround-sound.

But the main event was *La révolte*. Joining the fray were Roberto Bonetto, Ourania Gassou, Martin Kovarik and Tom Bell, whose comment that the piece was like 'finding yourself in the middle of a series of weather systems moving through the Cathedral' was picked up approvingly by the evening's compere, RCO president Gerard Brooks. The music originated in Guillou's visionary conceptual design for the Albert Blancafort organ in the Auditorio de Tenerife (2005), with pipes and their eight cases spread around the hall, playable from individual keyboards or from a large central console.

Tom Bell's synopsis quoted above, and David Gammie's programme note, offer the perfect summation of what it was like to be there. 'The half-hour journey takes us into a mysterious, poetic, violent and wholly original sound-world which defies any kind of analysis or description. It begins "as if in a dream" with little flurries of stardust and a haze of slowly drifting chords; it becomes "dark and restless" while instruments all converse, react and interact, and the sleeping giant at the west end gradually awakes; and finally spirals out of control as the *grand orgue* takes the lead in a ferocious explosion of raw energy, and the nine organs merge into a terrifying wall of sound.'

Westminster Cathedral, the RCO, David Mason, owner of Viscount Classical Organs – and all the musicians – are to be congratulated on making this experience possible for the full house in attendance. Another performance is scheduled for 17 January 2020 at the the Église de l'Oratoire du Louvre, in Guillou's home city, Paris. After that, who knows where *La révolte* will break out again? ■

Graeme Kay is a digital platforms producer for BBC Radio 3 and 4.

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Recorded on the Grant, Degens, & Bradbeer organ of St Mary's, Woodford, this CD includes some of Haydn's earliest works, written in the 1750s. Several of the works are thought to have been composed for the organ in the Bohemian Chancellery chapel at the Judenplatz in Vienna, where the composer was briefly employed.

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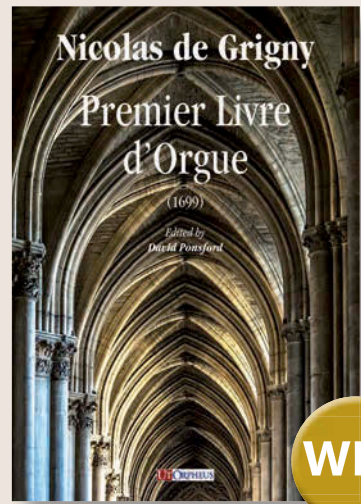
David Ponsford (ed.)

Ut Orpheus, ISBN 979-0-2153-2637-8, [RRP €41.95]

'... the summit of French baroque organ composition' (see feature, p.20)

In this canonical work, de Grigny employs large-scale structures, five-part fugues, harmonic language and modulatory schemes. While the original 1699 print was riddled with errors, here David Ponsford incorporates corrections and editorial suggestions.

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Singing peace

Traumatised by the devastating carnage of the first world war, members of the armed forces and civilians alike sought consolation through singing as the League of Nations was founded with the aim of fostering international cooperation and peace.

Brian Morton reports

The guns fell silent on 11 November 1918, but it took another seven months to force a peace treaty on Germany, and up to four years for a new and approximately equitable treaty between Germany and now-Communist Russia. In the middle of all this, an organisation was born whose sincere but utopian intention was to outlaw war forever and to provide a mechanism that would conciliate or arbitrate disputes between sovereign powers and, *in extremis*, punish those who resorted to unilateral violence. The word 'harmony' was often used, without much sense of irony.

The League of Nations, which was established on 10 January 1920, has had a bad press. Schoolchildren and college students are routinely set courses that major on its 'failure'. The world's first intergovernmental organisation devoted to peace is sometimes blamed outright for the coming of a second world war, a mere 20 years later. Much of what we think we know about the League is skewed. For a start, the idea that it was [American president] Woodrow Wilson's creation needs to be adjusted. Wilson made the formation of a League the last, and in his view most important, of his Fourteen Points, but the concept of an international peacekeeping body and the creation of a constitution for it was largely the work of British or British Empire figures, lawyers and jurists, soldiers, writers and scholars. Nor did it fail absolutely. In addition to pioneering humanitarian work, the League resolved disputes between sovereign powers, some of them newly formed out of old empires, that could otherwise have resulted in war. After all, the first world war had begun over an assassination in a place that most people in western Europe had never heard of.

One of the first reactions to the end of the war was singing. Lieutenant James Morton, who had served with the Royal Flying Corps and transferred to the new Royal Air Force, reports that his whole squadron got together to sing hymns and, later, 'less polite songs'. Welsh fusiliers on the Western Front spontaneously came together in choirs as the guns fell silent. Peace concerts were organised in towns all over Britain. A lady in Huddersfield noted mournfully in her diary that they would be rather short, for the moment, of tenors and basses. In Germany, the 'Internationale' was perhaps heard more often than religious works, but there is evidence that one group of soldiers near Aachen (unlike in the second, Germany was scarcely invaded in the first world war) organised themselves to perform a scratch version of Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem*, 'borrowing' a soprano from a local opera house.

Composers, like painters, were presented with new subject matter and themes. Gustav Holst, to pick just the most obvious example, had created a musical paradigm for conflict just before the war began: 'Mars,



COURTESY BRIAN MORTON

the bringer of war' was written in 1914, paired with 'Venus, the bringer of peace'. The other movements of *The Planets*, Holst's op.32, were completed by 1916, but only performed at short notice in September 1918 at the Queen's Hall. Holst's daughter Imogen told me that her father had never valued the work very highly but that he disliked incomplete performances, especially those where he was asked to finish with 'Jupiter', as she put it, 'to contrive a happy ending; he didn't think the world was a happy place, though he did think that mankind could transcend all the horridness'. Though predominantly an orchestral work, 'Neptune, the Mystic' ends with three offstage female choruses gradually fading into silence. Holst had been despatched to Salonica at the end of the war, but when he returned, somewhat traumatised by the blood and flies, he wrote the great choral *Ode to Death*, to words by Walt Whitman.

The League of Nations Union was a peace organisation set up to support the work of the League and to promote world peace. Many branches of the organisation seem to have had more or less formal choral wings, or ad hoc choruses who would gather to perform religious or secular works dedicated to the cause of peace. Catherine Waller Stone, a Scotswoman living in London in 1920 who had been active in the League of Nations Union and

▲ Lieutenant James Morton kept a record of singing patterns during the first world war

▶ The first meeting of the Assembly of the League of Nations took place on 15 November 1920 at the Salle de la Réformation in Geneva

► Gustav Holst: 'Mars, the bringer of war' was written in 1914, paired with 'Venus, the bringer of peace', with the rest of *The Planets* being completed two years later. After a spell in Salonica at the end of the war, the composer wrote *Ode to Death*, to words by Walt Whitman

▼ The League of Nations' anthem, 'Onward!', with words by William P. Taylor and music by Frederick Hall, was a rallying cry to action; it reflected the spirit of political idealism that prevailed after the carnage of the first world war



HERBERT LAMBERT

◄ was still alive in 1980, recounted to me: 'It was thought by a lot of us that singing was the most effective means we had of promoting peace, that somehow you could not sing and fight. I think we were a little naïve and we chose to ignore how much nationalistic – jingoistic, we used to say – stuff was out there.' Waller Stone remembered a small contingent of singers from Germany (which was not admitted into the League of Nations until 1926) coming over to London in the early days of the peace (she thought 1920) and singing religious and folk songs very quietly, as if to end forever the association of Germany with strident militarism. 'It made a big impact on us. After all those years of propaganda – murdered nuns and so on – we were learning that the Germans were just like us.'

I have had little success researching choral singing in Geneva itself, where the League was established. The Australian novelist Frank Moorhouse, a League obsessive, makes little of music in his great sequence of novels (*Grand Days*, *Dark Palace*, *Cold Light*) about Edith Campbell Berry, a secretariat worker at the League. The trilogy is inevitably much concerned with changing gender roles and sexual behaviours in the wake of the war, but Moorhouse has been able to send me photographs of women marching for peace and obviously singing, and I have met one very elderly Armenian man whose father was part of a delegation to Geneva begging to have the new nation admitted to the League under American protection (Woodrow Wilson didn't extend his principle of self-determination to nationalities he didn't know or understand). Mr Nalbandian says that his father remembered choral groups from many nations gathering in the cafes and restaurants of the city, singing songs of their homeland: 'Sometimes they would contest with one another, singing louder to drown out other voices in the next bar, but not in an aggressive way. It was as if they had found an alternative to fighting.' Small choirs sometimes performed before significant League signings or at meetings dedicated to refugee welfare or trafficking.

There was a League anthem. Moorhouse has also sent me links to 'Onward!' a 'song of world freedom' published in 1919 by composer William P. Taylor and lyricist Frederick Hall. But simply accessing that one song opens the door on a vast industry of music publishing whose dominant themes were peace, returning heroes and lost sons. It may be that song made no or very little active contribution to the preservation of peace, but music was an instinctive response to conflict and its resolution, a counter melody to the guns. ■

Formerly a presenter of jazz and classical music on BBC Radio 3, Brian Morton is a writer and broadcaster based in the west of Scotland.

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS ANTHEM

"ONWARD!" Song of World Freedom

Words by
WM P. TAYLOR

Music by
FREDERICK HALL

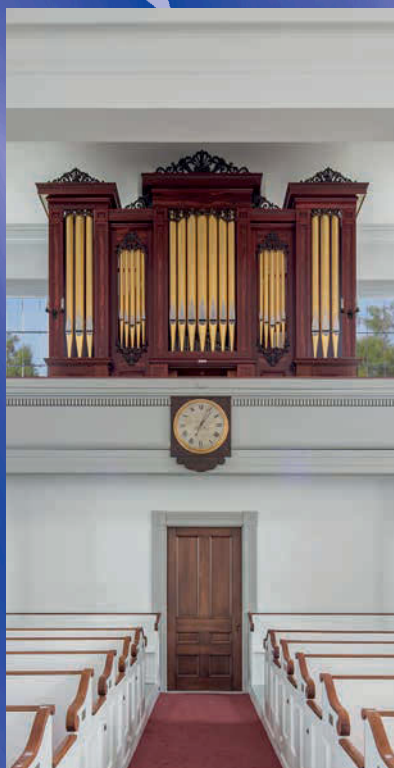
Maestoso (In bold march time; with dignity-not too fast)

Wake, ye Free-men! Arm and on - ward! Reck-on not the toll!
On - ward, Free-men! On, straight on - ward! Stay not ye for pain!
On - ward, Free-men! On - ward, Free - men! Sons of glo-rious sires!
* On - ward! Fur-ther on - ward, Free - men! War-born in - to Light!

Know ye not the cost of Free - dom? Know ye not her
Men have suf - fered, Men must suf - fer God's Right to main -
On through seas of blood, if need be! On thro' purg - ing
* See The Com - mon-wealth E - ter - nal Gleam - ing thro' the

marcato colla voce

* For formal occasions (one verse) use lines indicated by arrows.



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Toby Hession

... one holy light, one heavenly flame

Text: Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-94)

For the first of C&O's New Music commissions with Clare College, Cambridge, Toby Hession has written an uplifting anthem for SATB choir and organ; he talks to **Shirley Ratcliffe**



SAPPHIRE ARMITAGE

▲ Composer 'by accident': Toby Hession

Coming from a musical background, it was almost inevitable for Toby Hession to start learning the piano from an early age. His love of music blossomed as a young chorister at Peterborough Cathedral under the watchful eye of Andrew Reid. 'To this day, I attribute my ability to sight-read and score-read well at the piano to my choristership, because it was simply what we did, day in and day out,' he explains. 'Those years made me aware of a huge amount of music, from early Parisian polyphony to works by Sir James MacMillan

and Gabriel Jackson. As a 10-year-old this mostly went over my head, but now I realise how critical this was to cultivating in me a love and appreciation of all kinds of music.'

It was at this stage that Hession knew he wanted to study music seriously. After finishing as a chorister in 2010, he went to Chetham's School of Music in Manchester, where he studied piano and trumpet, quickly dropping the latter for composition. Here he began to compose pieces of some substance. 'It started by accident. I needed a substitute for the trumpet in my musical programme

and found that I really enjoyed composing and, to me, it wasn't dreadful! Each term Chetham's put on a Composers' Concert and the experience of hearing my earliest pieces played by some of the best young musicians convinced me I wanted composition to hold a place in my musical life. I learned a huge amount from these experiences, mostly from the ones that didn't go as planned!'

After Chetham's, Hession decided to take what he calls the 'university route.' 'While Chetham's was an amazing place to spend my teenage years, all day and every day I was surrounded by other musicians. I wanted to go to a place where I could also meet and befriend non-musicians. In my sixth form I discovered my passion for conducting, and a number of professional visiting conductors at school counselled that I should study an academic music course.'

Some of Hession's best memories come from his time as a choral scholar (and later lay clerk) at Clare College, Cambridge. 'Not only did the choral scholarship reinvigorate a love of choral music that had subsided simply through lack of time at Chetham's, but it took me to amazing concert venues across the world. The additional duties of singing Choral Evensong three times a week kept my sight-reading skills up to scratch, and allowed me to appreciate the music I had sung as a chorister with a more mature outlook.'

Hession obtained an instrumental award from Cambridge University Musical Society (CUMS). 'It was for piano and allowed me

to play in a quartet that tackled a number of pieces over the year with professional coaches. My involvement with CUMS changed after my first undergraduate year. I pursued conducting for two years as an assistant conductor and then in my MPhil year as a conducting scholar. These years proved to be some of the most informative ones I have had. Hession was fortunate to study conducting with David Hill at Cambridge on an *ad hoc* basis: 'He is a fantastic teacher and he helped me prepare quite a few projects.'

Hession says that, while all composers influence him to some degree, 'I can certainly pin down a few whose music has really come to inhabit and shape my own musical language. For a long time I felt slightly ashamed of this, but in recent years I have come to realise that one should be truly proud of one's influences and idols. The following figures point to an aspect of my musical upbringing, [although] I believe any composer's authentic musical

honest, the Holmes text and I had a bit of a love-hate relationship (in the end to the benefit of the piece). The problem I found when I unpacked it was that it didn't entirely suit the manner of through-composition [I wanted to use]. The stanzas are very short and hugely contrasting; each one could be a miniature setting of its own, with a distinct soundworld and musical language. Navigating the journeys between the stanzas became a sticking point for me.'

His brief from music director Graham Ross was for an uplifting anthem for general liturgical use. 'While it may not be explicitly "major-keyed and bright-eyed" music all the way through, I certainly hope it is rousing and stirring in its own way. I simply wanted to capture something of Holmes's turbulent, but in the end very positive, words.' Hession chose not to write specifically for the very talented Clare Choir, but for all choirs, and in doing so has learned from this experience. 'The piece

'Rather than read an orchestration manual, just buy a full score of Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*'

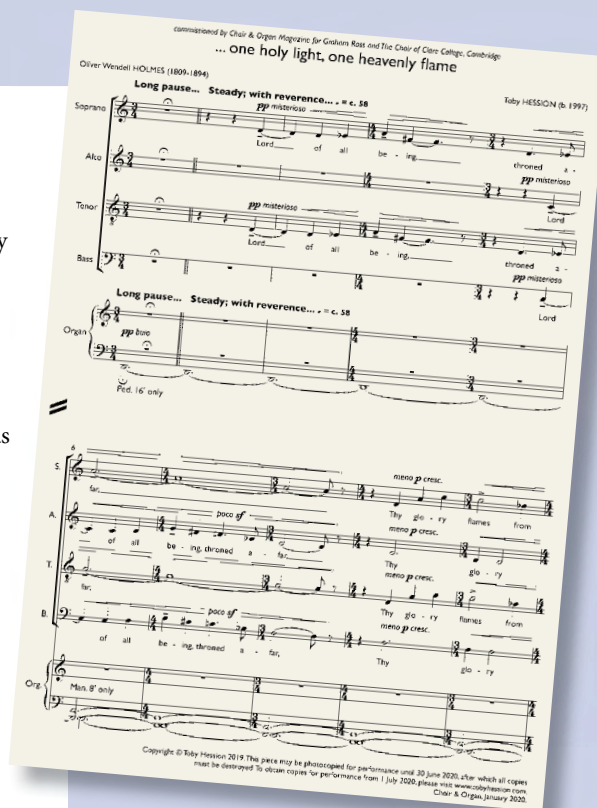
language should simply be a product of their own unique set of experiences. For me, Rachmaninov is the greatest tunesmith ever, and [I now find] a number of Howellsian gestures have started to crop up in my pieces, which I embrace. Recently, I have come across and love the music of Germaine Tailleferre: it's like Ravel, but even more passionate – and Ravel, incidentally, is the best orchestrator. A composition teacher once told me that rather than read any orchestration manual, I should just buy a full score of *Daphnis et Chloé* as it contains every instrumental texture imaginable. Musical theatre has played a large role in my life. My father, among many things, is a musical theatre MD, and many summers have been spent playing keyboards in his productions; Stephen Sondheim's stand out the most for me.'

For Hession's C&O choral commission for Clare College Choir, he chose to set a text by Oliver Wendell Holmes, ... *one holy light, one heavenly flame*. 'It's quite an odd piece,' he says, 'but it has a strange charm to it that I didn't foresee when writing it. To be brutally

has been good for me having to write in a disciplined manner, particularly with respect to the vocal parts.'

To date, Hession has many notable achievements, the most recent being winning his category in the King's Singers' A Carol for Christmas Competition with *Videntes stellam*, published by Edition Peters, who have secured a number of commissions for him. 'It started an ongoing and very prosperous relationship both with Peters and the King's Singers, who invited me to work as a pianist at their summer school, and commissioned me to compose *Master of Music* for their 50th anniversary disc, *GOLD*.'

Following his MPhil, Hession has enrolled as a répétiteur student in the opera department at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama: 'After four years of studying composition intensely at Clare, I needed a complete change of tack. I am working with astonishing singers, studying huge amounts of repertoire, and really getting inside the mechanics of it, revealing all sorts of procedures and devices I can take into my own work.' www.tobyhession.com ■



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The Choir of Clare College, with Ashley Chow (org) and directed by Graham Ross, give the premiere of ... *one holy light, one heavenly flame* on Sunday 26 January 2020 at 6pm in the Chapel of Clare College, Cambridge.



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Masterworks Chorale is a Leeds-based mixed adult choir who perform sacred music from around the world spanning the last 500 years. To celebrate their founder-director Tim Knight's 60th birthday, the choir embarked on a tour around Stirling, Scotland, where they performed works by Ēriks Esenvalds, Morten Lauridsen, Jacques Arcadelt and Healey Willan, among others.

Speaking about the value of this tour, Knight said, 'We have been touring constantly for about 20 years, so it's the fellowship and bonding that tours give that make for a better choir. Also, the variety of venues (and trips to Loch Lomond) keep the members both on their toes musically and excited about the choir.'

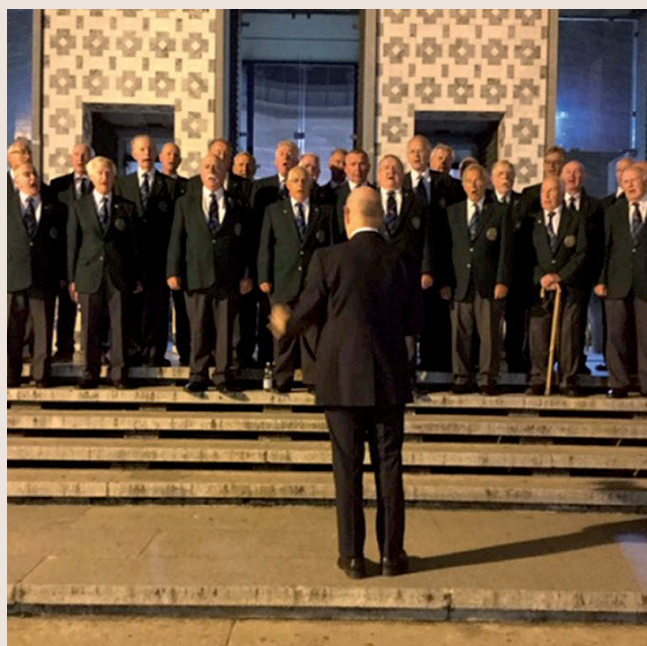
Deciding to tour 'at home' this year (because of Brexit), the choir members put their musical efforts towards raising money for charity, securing a total of £12,000 in the duration of their tour. A highlight was their performance at Paisley Abbey (right), where they raised £800 for a local hospice.

How would Knight describe the overall experience? 'As in all tours, the heightened activity of four concerts in three days gives choir members the chance to really get to know the music. It enables them to sing to larger audiences without the worry of the choir management having to promote the concerts – that relies on a good tour operator – and when they return, they come back with a renewed commitment to their choir.'



JO PORTER

ANN ROWSON



ON TOUR 2 Talgarth Male Choir

Tour location Tuscany, Italy

Participants 74

Performances Sant'Agostino Church (San Gimignano), Basilica di Santa Maria Assunta (Montecatini)

Tour company Club Europe Music Tours

In September this year, Talgarth Male Choir toured with Club Europe to Tuscany, Italy, after the company was recommended to them by other choirs. Their performance venues included the 13th-century Sant'Agostino Church in San Gimignano and the Basilica di Santa Maria Assunta in Montecatini. The performance of sacred music at the latter earned a full house and a standing ovation, making it a tour highlight for the choir.

The trip was part of the choir's 50th anniversary celebrations and concert secretary Peter Rowson spoke to C&O about the success of the tour and the positive feedback received all round. In a report on the tour, their manager at Club Europe was described as 'incredibly helpful and resourceful throughout', while the trip was described as 'a fitting way to round off our year of celebration.'

◀ **Classical Movements**

Types of tours Performing tours

Website classicalmovements.com

Contact +1 703 683 6040

info@classicalmovements.com

Clients Adult, university and youth choirs and orchestras of all sizes.

Scale 200 concerts and 60 tours arranged annually.

Regions covered 145 countries across Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America and the Caribbean, South and Central America.

Club Europe Music Tours

Types of tours Performing and cultural tours and retreats

Website club-europe.co.uk

Contact Lucy Szymonski +44 20 8772 2861, Lusy.s@club-europe.co.uk, (main) +44 80 0496 4996

Clients Adult, youth and school orchestras, choirs, bands and performing arts groups of all sizes (usually range from 20-40 people but there is no maximum).

Scale 90 tours arranged annually.

Regions covered 30 countries worldwide, including Europe and Australasia. Representative present in each country.

Ellison Travel & Tours

Types of tours Performing and festival tours

Website ellisontravel.com

Contact +1 800 265 7022, email via website.

Based in Canada.

Clients Student music groups.

Regions covered Canadian-based and international tours and festivals.

Encore Tours

Types of tours Performing tours and 'shadow' tours for friends and family

Website encoretours.com

Contact Jon Linker +1 617-958-

9575, jlinker@acis.com;

office: +1 877-460-3801,

encoretours@acis.com

Clients Musical groups of all ages; organists. Groups of 10-250 people.

Scale 60 tours arranged annually. Based in the US.

Regions covered Tours to Europe, US, Canada, Mexico, Costa Rica, Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Uruguay, Japan, Vietnam and China. Local representatives in countries visited.

Going Places

Types of tours Performing tours

Website goingplacetours.com

Contact Christine Pelham (mob) +1

914 318 4076, (land) +1 978 792 5460,

goingpl@bestweb.net

Clients Amateur groups, church choirs, community choruses and

handbell choirs of 20-200 people, all mostly from the US.

Regions covered UK, Europe, Canada, New Zealand and Australia; groups wishing to perform in the US also welcome.

Gower Music Tours

Types of tours Performing tours

Website gowertours.com

Contact +44 1527 851410,

email via website.

Clients School bands, choirs and orchestras; adult choirs and orchestras of all sizes.

Regions covered Europe. Option to be accompanied by multi-lingual team member.

Halsbury Travel Group - Halsbury Music

Types of tours Performing tours and cultural tours

Website halsbury.com

Contact Alison Fox, +44 1159 404303, alisonfox@halsbury.com

Clients School bands, choirs and orchestras; adult ensembles (min. 20 people).

Scale 65 music tours organised annually.

Regions covered Europe, Canada, US and Far East. Local representatives in most countries.

Melody Music

Types of tours Performing tours

Website melodymusic-company.com

Contact Mark Stuart Burrows

(M.D.) +44 2920 212531,

mark@melodymusic-company.com

Clients School and adult choirs of any size (previously arranged tours for 16-530 singers).

Scale Arranges 30 tours annually.

Regions covered Europe, Russia, South America, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Links with Krakow International Festival and Warsaw International Choir Festival. Each tour accompanied by local representative and Melody Music representative.

MusiCultur Travel GmbH

Types of tours Performing tours and competitions

Website musicultur.com

Contact Susan Schneider +49 228 28986012, info@musicultur.com

Clients Choirs and orchestras of all ages and sizes.

Scale 60-70 tours arranged annually.

Regions covered Germany, Italy, France, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Spain, Poland.

Music Contact International

Types of tours Performing tours

Website home.music-contact.com

Contact +1 800 624 0166,

+1 802 862 2200,

travel@music-contact.com

Clients Choirs, bands and orchestras.

Regions covered Trips to festivals and worldwide tours.

Music & Travel Tour Consultants

Types of tours Performing tours;

cultural and special interest tours

Website musicandtravel.com

Contact (UK) Matthew Grocutt

+44 1491 614406, matthew@musicandtravel.com;

(Italy) +39 340 506 3685, italy@musicandtravel.com;

(US) +1-610-329-3447, usa@musicandtravel.com;

(South America) argentina@musicandtravel.com

Clients Choirs, orchestras and bands of all ages and sizes (has previously worked with groups of 8-200 people).

Scale Arranges 30-35 tours annually

Regions covered Europe, US,

Canada, Australasia and Far East.

Local representatives in each country.

Olton Travel

Types of tours Performing and cultural tours

Website oltontravelrussia.com

Contact Olga Yemelyanova,

+7 (812) 985 8180/8108

info@oltontravelrussia.com

Clients Student and adult choirs and orchestras of any size.

Scale Around 30 tours annually

Regions covered Russia.

OneStage Specialist Concert Tours

Types of tours Performing tours

Website onestage.co.uk

Contact +44 121 244 5892

(Julian), +44 20 8568 4586 (Sonia),

tourenquiries@onestage.co.uk

Clients Amateur ensembles (min. 12 people).

Regions covered Europe, Asia, US and Canada.

ON TOUR 3 Tiffin Boys' Choir

Tour location Porto, Coimbra and Lisbon (Portugal)

Participants 38 students, 6 staff

Performances Igreja da Nossa Senhora da Lapa, Livraria Lello (Porto), Igreja de Santa Cruz (Coimbra), Sé, Lisboa (Lisbon)

Tour company ACFEA Tour Consultants

Tiffin Boys' Choir from Kingston, London recently toured with ACFEA to Portugal, taking in Porto, Coimbra and Lisbon. During their tour they performed in Livraria Lello, the world-renowned bookshop in Porto for which tickets must be purchased in advance, as well as in the cathedral in Sé, Lisbon. On the practicalities of a tour, music director James Day said, 'Organising a tour is such a big task. As a

choir we really want to focus on performing great music to a high quality and enjoy the culture that our destination offers. Using a tour company allows us to focus on these.'

For a school choir especially, tours are a major part of the musical and academic calendar: 'One of the challenges that school choirs face is the exam pressure students face in the final term. Having an exciting tour in the diary really helps motivate senior choristers to attend rehearsals and have a reward at the end of exams.'

Speaking of the benefits of the tour, Day explained, 'Tours are invaluable for the development and growth of the choir. Singing several concerts in close succession allows us to really work on the sound of the choir. Being away from home brings everyone closer together and allows for a lot of focus.'



PALOMA ALVAR ACFEA

◀ **Rayburn Tours**

Types of tours Performing tours

Website rayburntours.com

Contact +44 1332 985076, or via website

Clients Youth and adult choirs, bands and orchestras of any size.

Regions covered Europe and the US. Option to be accompanied by Tour Manager.

Richardson & Gray

Types of tours Performing tours and cathedral residencies

Website richardsonandgray.com

Contact (office) +44 1584 879348, (mob) +44 7811 946708, email via website

Clients Provides tours for groups coming to Europe, particularly from North America.

Sing & Travel

Types of tours Performing tours, cultural tours and music events

Website singandtravel.com

Contact Marina Kaudasch +34 622 114 785 marina@singandtravel.com

Clients Choirs of all ages and sizes; individual singers.

Scale Arranges 15-18 tours annually.

Regions covered Europe and the US. Accompanied by a Tour Manager.

Sound Escapes UK

Types of tours Performing tours

Website soundescapesuk.com

Contact Jo Porter +44 115 874 6396, jo.porter@soundescapesuk.com

Clients Adult choirs and music ensembles (min. 10 people).

Scale Arranges 10 tours annually.

Regions covered England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, including islands eg. Isle of Wight, Isle of Man, Channel Islands. Accompanied by a Tour Manager.

Travelbound

Types of tours Performing tours

Website travelbound.co.uk

Contact +44 1273 244 572, email via website

Clients School or university choirs and orchestras.

ON TOUR 4 Classical Chorus

Tour location: Lake Garda, Italy

Participants: 150

Performances: Saint Mark's Basilica (Venice), Verona Cathedral, Lake Garda (Lazise), Piazza dei Signori (Verona)

Tour company Halsbury Travel Group

For their first overseas tour, the singers of Classical Chorus UK visited Italy with their musical director Abigail Harris. The choir, which is an amateur mixed-voice adult choir, performed a selection of sacred, operatic and secular music including *Panis Angelicus*, *Adiemus* and a medley from *The Greatest Showman* in locations around Venice, Lake Garda and Verona.

Speaking of the location and the logistics of the tour, Harris said, 'The three cities complemented each other brilliantly and the singers

felt they had superb value for money. Across the five days and four nights, we had a well-planned itinerary which meant we could enjoy both relaxed leisure time in the swimming pool of the hotel, as well as plenty of time experiencing the local culture and tourist attractions.'

The music, of course, took centre stage: 'We particularly enjoyed the standing ovation for *Va, Pensiero* – local Italians even congratulated us at the end. Halsbury also organised for us to see *Nabucco* at the Verona Opera, which tied in perfectly.'

Overall, Harris felt that the experience was holistically beneficial to the choir: 'Both socially and musically, the choir has reached new heights and the tour has given us a real sense of achievement.' Classical Chorus will be touring with Halsbury again next summer, this time to Barcelona.



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The Norway option

Restoring a late 19th-century organ in Skien has returned an instrument of historic significance to full working order. **Stein Johannes Kolnes** and **William McVicker** served as co-consultants to the project

Skien, in the county of Telemark, is one of Norway's most ancient towns, whose expansion during the 16th century was based on timber and sawmills. The earliest report of an organ dates from the first half of the 17th century, but any early instruments were destroyed by fire. Another was built in 1783 by the Polish-Danish builder Daniel Wroblewski, later replaced by an instrument by the Norwegian Niels Svendsen in 1864.

This church also burned down and the new one was completed in 1894. Its two tall towers overlook the town centre, visible from a great distance. The organ was placed in the west gallery and was built by what was then Norway's largest organ company, Olsen & Jørgensen in Kristiania (Oslo), founded by August Nilsen in 1876 after studies with Franz Wilhelm Sonreck in Cologne. After Nilsen's early death, his widow ran the company until the two young employees Nils Reinhart Olsen

and Jens Henrik Jørgensen – Mrs Nilsen's nephew – took over after visits abroad: Olsen visited Sonreck, Jørgensen went to Willis.

With its 31 stops, the organ became Norway's third largest. The organist Abraham Hvidsten (1878-1944), a central figure in local music life, was a fine player and an organ adviser; he had the organ enlarged.

Nilsen and his successors cherished the typical late-romantic German style with their cone chests, mechanical actions and a free-standing console facing the altar, where dynamic alterations were achieved without a swellbox, rather by registering the stops in a certain order. Until the beginning of the 19th century, only a small choir would

between the two towers behind the gallery. Resting on iron beams protruding from the gallery back wall, the Great, Choir and Pedal sections were placed side-by-side, partly spread over two levels, while the stopped 32ft rested horizontally within a shallow case. The gallery was extended forward to allow sufficient space for large-scale performances.

Despite the government's unwillingness to provide foreign currency, Jørgensen was able to trade effectively in order to satisfy the heavy demand and compensate for his lack of staff. However, Kleive demanded that the entire organ for Skien should be a Norwegian product, a requirement Jørgensen managed to accommodate – the new English reeds and the

Stylistic ideals were gradually replaced with more open-minded approaches to quality issues

assist the city organists during service. The general situation soon changed radically as choirs grew and the performance of oratorios became common. Organs positioned in an acoustically favourable west gallery provided little space for singers and musicians; in Skien (and elsewhere) the console would divide the gallery in two, complicating contact between the performers.

Post-war hardships prevented Hvidsten's successor Kristoffer Kleive (1913-2005) from improving the situation, but planning began in 1949. Buying a new organ from abroad was out of the question, and only Norway's largest company had the capacity to build an ambitious instrument. After Olsen's resignation it was renamed J.H. Jørgensen Orgelfabrikk; Jens Henrik's son, Hilmar (1892-1961), took charge from 1939.

The organ's large Swell section was placed in a vaulted room with plastered concrete walls

console being the only exception – due to the authorities' unfair treatment of the extremely gifted (but fragile) German console-maker Josef Mühlbauer. The console cabinet was made in Oslo, but had to be transported to Munich to be completed by L. Eisenschmid.

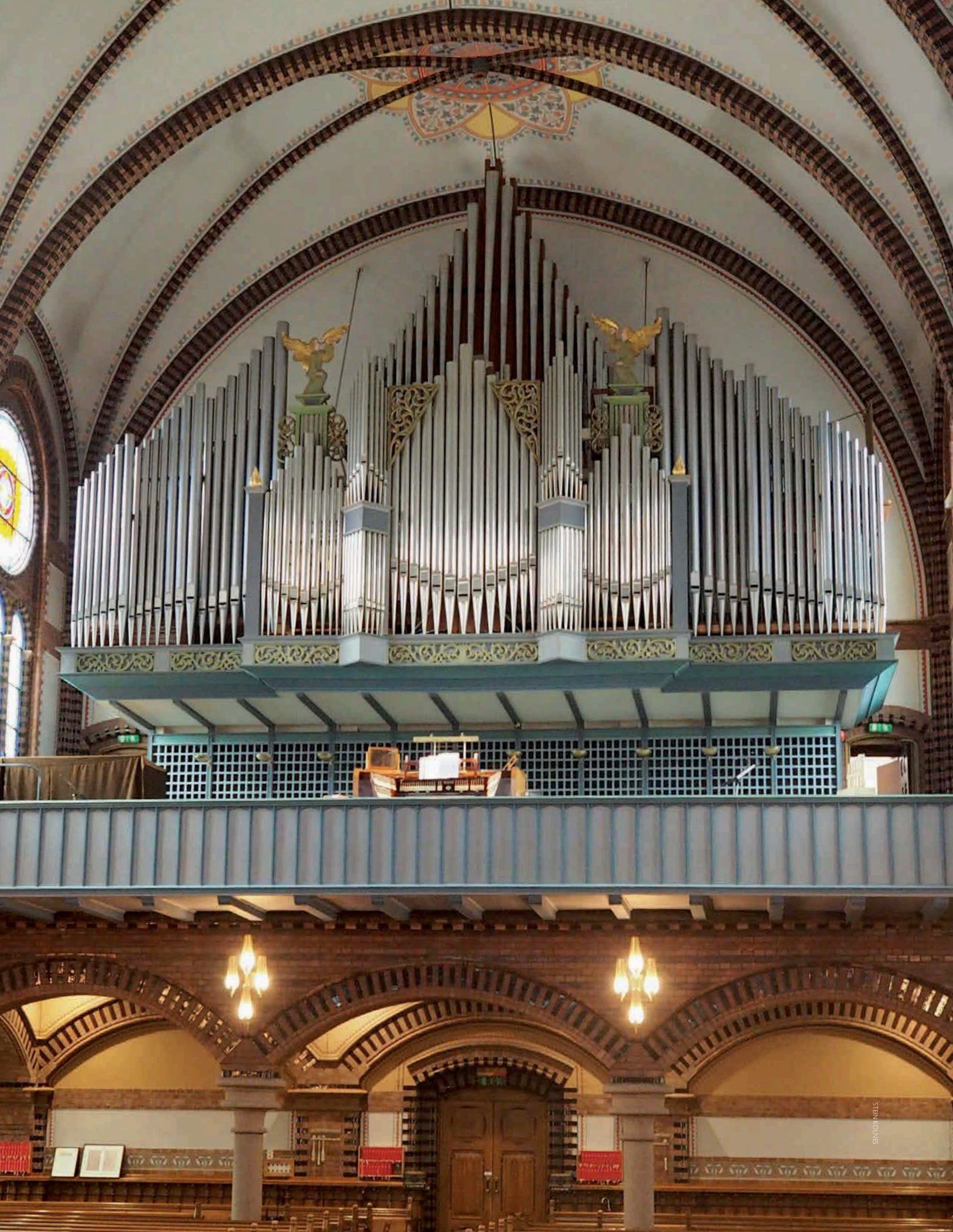
Most of Jørgensen's employees must have been engaged in the project, which resulted in the company's largest organ becoming once again the third largest in the country. By that time the largest instruments were Steinmeyer's at Trondheim Cathedral and the slightly smaller Walcker in Oslo Cathedral. The employees at this time included the Swiss organ builder Friedrich Goll and the Englishman Gerald Carrington.

After 1954, the Skien instrument was treasured by Kleive and – during the critical neo-baroque period – by the distinguished ►

► Jørgensen's organ case in Skien Church, Norway

▼ The commanding spires of Skien Church, Norway





Skien Church, Telemark, Norway

OLSEN & JØRGENSEN (1894); J.H. JØRGENSEN (1936/1954);

KARL SCHUKE BERLINER ORGELBAUWERKSTATT GMBH (2019)

MANUAL I

C-c⁴, 61 notes

Principal	16	1894
Principal	8	1894
Jubalfloyte	8	1894
Gemshorn	8	1894
Liebl. Gedakt	8	1936
Oktav	4	1894
Fløyte	4	1936
Kvint	2 ² / ₃	1954
Oktav	2	1894
Cymbel	4 fag	1954
Cornett	2-5 fag	1894
Mixtur	4-6 fag	1954
Fagott	16	1954
Trompet	8	1954
Clarine	4	1954

MANUAL II

C-c⁴, 61 notes

Kvintatøn	16	1954
Principal	8	1894
Salicional	8	1894
Rørfløyte	8	1894
Spissfløyte	8	1936
Principal	4	1954
Koppelfløyte	4	1954
Kvint	2 ² / ₃	1954
Oktav	2	1954
Nachthorn	2	1936
Larigot (Enclosed)	1 ¹ / ₃	1954
Scharff (Enclosed)	5 fag	1954
Dulcian (Enclosed)	16	1954
Fagott (Enclosed, free reed)	8	1894
Krumhorn (Enclosed)	8	1954
Geigen Regal (Enclosed)	4	1954
<i>Tremulant</i>		

MANUAL III

C-c⁴, 61 notes (enclosed)

Dolce Bourdon	16	1894
Principal	8	1954
Gedakt	8	1894
Hohlfløyte	8	1894
Violin	8	1936
Voix Celeste	8	1936
Prestant	4	1936
Fl. Octaviant	4	1894
Fugara	4	1894
Kvint	2 ² / ₃	1954
Principal	2	1954
Ters	1 ³ / ₅	1954
Siffloyte	1	1954
Rauschkvint	2 fag	1894
Plein jeu	5 fag	1954

Trompet	16	1936
Solotrompet	8	1954
French Horn	8	1936
Oboe	8	1954
Zinke	4	1954
<i>Tremulant</i>		

MANUAL IV

C-c⁴, 61 notes (Altar organ)

Vox Thelin (Prepared for)	8
Flauto Traverso (Prepared for)	4
Salicional (Prepared for)	8
Unda Maris (Prepared for)	8
Ekkobourdon (Prepared for)	8

PEDAL

C-f, 30 notes

Grand Bourdon	32	1954
Kontrabass	16	1954
Violonbass	16	1894
Subbass	16	1894
Bourdon	16	1954
<i>by transmission from Manual III</i>		
Kvint	10 ² / ₃	1894
Oktavbass	8	1894
Gedacktbass	8	1936
Violincello	8	1894
Oktav	4	1894
Koppelfløyte	4	1954
Flageolet	2	1894
Doublett	2 fag	1954
Mixtur	4 fag	1936
Basun	16	1894
Dulcian	16	1954
<i>by transmission from Manual II</i>		
Trompet	8	1894
Clarion	4	1954
Singend Kornett	2	1954

Couplers: II-I, III-I, IV-I, I-Ped, II-Ped, III-Ped, IV-Ped, Ped 4

Combinations: Piano; Mezzoforte; Forte; Tutti; 'Tunger I' (Reeds I); 'Tunger 2' (Reeds 2); 4 separate pedal combinations; 4 free combinations

Crescendo (Walze)

Reeds off; Mixtures off; 16ft pedal/manual off

Membrane (Taschen) chests to Manuals II, III, IV and Pedal; cone chest (1894) and membrane chest to Manual I
Pitch a¹=440Hz, tuned to equal temperament

◁ organist, choirmaster and composer Harald Gullichsen (b.1946). Despite going 'out of fashion' soon after its completion, it has been respected by those who knew it, until monopolised, stylistic ideals were gradually replaced by more open-minded approaches to quality issues.

In Norwegian churches, large-scale performances with choir and orchestra have long since moved from the gallery down to the chancel area. In Skien, a lovely little positive organ, built in 1994 by local builder Nils Arne Venheim (1937-2014), has served continuo purposes. These days, during organ recitals the audience wants to see the performer, and (for some services) music needs to be directed from downstairs. The positive organ is (in most cases) too small for accompaniment, and there is no room for a second instrument. The solution has therefore been to provide a second, mobile console for the west-end Jørgensen organ.

The instrument has been lovingly restored by the team from Karl Schuke Berliner Orgelbauwerkstatt under the exacting leadership of Jürgen Magiera. Some minor infelicities have been adjusted and a comprehensive combination system has been added alongside the fine Eisenschmid console. A section of Manual II, previously coupled to the empty Manual IV in the 1970s, has been repatriated. An Altar Organ (Manual IV) was prepared for in 1953, and it is hoped that this section will be added in forthcoming years. The organ was re-inaugurated at Skien Church's 125th anniversary festival weekend in late August 2019, with commissioned music directed by the talented Kantor, Karolina Wisniewska.

At the outset of the project, a key question being asked was in respect of the organ's historical value: is a 1950s electric-action organ worth identifying as an historical monument? How important is it? In answering this question, there were several matters to consider.

First, the instrument was enlarged in 1954 into its present form. It incorporated material by Olsen & Jørgensen from 1894 and by J.H. Jørgensen from 1936 – each tranche of work has its own historical value, especially the surviving material from the original 19th-century instrument.

Second, it is the work of an important Norwegian organ building company (Jens



JØRGENSEN

▲ Jørgensen's organ console at Skien Church, Norway, manufactured by Eisenschmid

Henrik Jørgensen and his son Hilmar), whose work is not represented at an international level. It is high-quality organ building by a company which was able confidently to develop its own style and character.

Third, during the 1930s, the influence of German organ building prevailed – this time it came perhaps from one of Jørgensen's employees, who was involved in the work carried out by Steinmeyer at Trondheim Cathedral (1929-30). From 1930, Jørgensen was probably more influenced by the substantial organ by E.F. Walcker & Cie in Oslo Cathedral, which he maintained after 1935. During the rebuilding work at Trondheim, an English Solo Organ was added and Jørgensen probably thought some English ideas were worth including in his organ for Skien. At that time, the English builder Henry Willis & Sons had been making special French Horn stops for St Paul's Cathedral in London (1930) and St George's Hall, Liverpool (1931). By one means or another, a version of these Willis-style reed stops found its way into the Skien scheme.

Finally, after the second world war, the organ was reordered again; by this time Jørgensen had established his own confident idiom. To his scheme was added the console from Eisenschmid in Germany. At that time,

an organist's usual way of controlling an instrument would have been through the so-called *frei-kombination* system, enabling an early form of 'programming' which could be undertaken by the organist at the console to allow him or her to pre-select stops to be controlled by an electrical combination system – and therefore to be able to change stops without needing an assistant.

So what of Jørgensen's organ building style and musical character? In a curious way, the organ reflects various political alliances over the years. During the 19th century, German organ building had a profound impact in various countries, including those in Scandinavia. England, by contrast, was equally besotted by French and German romantic organ building during the same period. By 1954, Jørgensen was able to draw on a wide variety of experiences and influences: German, Scandinavian and English – all coloured by the seedling development of the *Orgelbewegung*. Ironically, Jørgensen's style, as inherited from the 19th century in Norway, had never wholly abandoned classical choruses, with their inspiring columns of silvery diapason sound. With relative ease, Jørgensen drew together the vestiges of the classical tradition which he had inherited alongside romantic tendencies, crowned

with the emerging colours of the juvenile Organ Reform. These instruments were truly 'eclectic', designed for any musical repertoire – and this was the style matured by Jørgensen during and after the second world war.

Organ builders tend to assimilate various influences into their own style – and this is how Jørgensen did it. The Skien instrument is a fine piece of work, a noble organ, skilfully built with musical personality: it is a fine representative of mid-20th-century Norwegian organ building. This is what makes the instrument special; it is something for the people of Skien to be proud of. ■

Stein Johannes Kolnes is a Norwegian organ historian, retired organist, former teacher of organology in Oslo and church music theory in Stavanger, and formerly advising the Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage in organ matters. He is presently working on a monograph on J.H. Jørgensen Orgelfabrikk.

William McVicker is organ curator at the Royal Festival Hall, chairman of the Association of Independent Organ Advisers, and Professor of Organology at the Royal Academy of Music, of which he is an Honorary Associate. He is an Honorary Fellow of the Institute of Musical Instrument Technology.

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David Hill answers your questions about all matters relating to choirs and their conductors

Is a conductor's primary focus on the blend of the choir as a whole, or providing the best singing technique for each choir member?

When choirs are working out blend, tuning, balance and a myriad other issues, the director is facing a challenge of how to gauge the health and individuality of voices, many with strong, resonant sounds (often asked to sing more quietly) versus the need to ensure an overall blend. My advice is to embrace

the individuality, and to know of ways it can be nurtured: the most obvious route is 'voicing', which allows all singers to feel more comfortable with their contribution.

What exactly do you mean by 'voicing a choir'?

I am asked on a regular basis about this process and have touched on it as a subject, albeit briefly, in the past. 'Voicing' as a term relating to sound is often used in merging different sounds into a single entity. Pianists finding inner harmony or emphasising melody while keeping other sounds under control, through the differently weighted fingers, is but one. An organ builder 'voices' the different ranks on an instrument, creating a 'chorus of sound' making the sound of the instrument distinctive. Like the many contrasting sounds on an instrument, in an orchestra or a choir, it is how they merge which creates a unique soundworld. We bring to a choir our individuality in all respects: looks, behaviour, voice, clothes, different levels of ability and so on. It is the uniqueness of sound from the human voice which combines our purpose and reason for joining together. Other things evolve as a consequence, but 'singing' is the unifying element.

We don't wear the same clothes, we don't look the same and we do not sound the same, though there will be similarities. There is a widely held view that we should place our sounds, in a choir, in such a way that they can help and complement each other. This enforced 'blending' assists all singers to feel more comfortable in the area they are placed. For instance, a singer with a sound that might be compared to an oboe could feel uncomfortably loud or too present next to a soft-grained timbre such as a flute. Imagine the soft-grained flute next to a trumpet, and hopefully you begin to see how this all works. Then imagine different colours for the many sounds you hear as a conductor, and how they might be applied to the artistic canvas.

The process

Line up singers, ask them to sing something in unison and using their full voice. Go along the line of sound, listen to the different timbres and see if you can spot the similarities and differences. Re-arrange the group, gradually, and then stand back and listen to whether it is better, or not. It might take some time to work through the possibilities, but it should be rewarding for all, and not intimidating in any way. My suggestion would be to place the larger, reedier sounds in the middle of a line or section, then work in other sounds on each side. Using three colours; green (flutes, light voices), yellow (more like clarinets or oboes) and red (the more robust but not necessarily better voices) in the middle. A row could look typically like this:

G G G Y Y Y R R R R R Y Y Y G G G ...

Then mixing everyone up in different parts is an interestingly different alternative, and the subject for another short article. ■

David Hill is musical director of The Bach Choir and Leeds Philharmonic Society, principal conductor of Yale Schola Cantorum, and associate guest conductor of The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

◀ The process of voicing: 'Go along the line of sound, listen to the different timbres'



SIM CANETTY-CLARKE

Do you have any questions relating to choral direction and singing? Send them to David Hill via the editor: maggie.hamilton@markallengroup.com

‘Uncommon appeal’

In the concluding part of his survey of Handel's *Messiah*, **Malcolm Bruno** examines how Mozart's orchestration helped the oratorio to evolve into an expansive choral work



EDWARD EDWARDS, VALE CENTER FOR BRITISH ART

An auspicious year at the end of a tumultuous decade, 1789 was marked by revolution in France, a constitution in America, and in Vienna by Mozart's re-orchestration of Handel's *Messiah*. On many fronts it was a year ushering in a new world order. The musical landscape of Hanoverian England in which Handel had first penned *Messiah* a half-century earlier – in late summer 1741 – was also undergoing the rapid change of society at large. *Messiah* typified this course especially: from its elitist beginnings as an operatic entertainment for Lent, first performed in Dublin's New Music Hall in 1742, Handel's most esteemed oratorio had evolved into an expansive choral work of uncommon appeal.

By the 1780s *Messiah* still remained the province of London's great and good – in such performances as those given by Thomas Greatorex's fashionably genteel 'Concerts of Ancient Music'; though as a new century beckoned, its reach had been irreversibly widened by the grand Westminster Abbey celebrations in 1784 marking the centenary of Handel's birth. The assembled choral forces for this landmark event – an Abbey choir amplified by regional voices, such as those from the then 70-year old Three Choirs Festival – numbered some 513 singers. Handel's 1741 orchestra – that had already been extended to accommodate the charitable Foundling Hospital concerts during the composer's final years – also swelled beyond recognition for the Westminster celebrations. Supporting a 'monster choir' as George Grove was later to describe it,

◀ The grand Westminster Abbey celebrations in 1784 marking the centenary of Handel's birth. The assembled choral forces numbered 513 singers, accompanied by Handel's 1741 orchestra swelled beyond recognition

a sense of its enormity was captured by Charles Burney, himself present for the performances:

... a more numerous Band than was ever known to be collected in any country or on any occasion whatever ... Every species of instrument that was capable of producing grand effects in a great orchestra was present. Among the rarities were 6 trombones, played by members of His majesty's military band, a double bassoon never before used and to supplement the kettle drums in the tower, often used by Handel, the double-bass kettle drums, much longer as well as more capacious ...

Meanwhile, a decade before the Abbey celebrations, *Messiah*'s fame had reached Handel's native Germany with a trajectory leading to Vienna: its first performance in Hamburg in English in 1772 was followed in 1775 by a version led by C.P.E. Bach in German, also in Hamburg. Mozart heard *Messiah* two years later in a shortened (and rather eccentrically re-orchestrated) version by one of Bach's Leipzig successors, Johann Adam Hiller. It would, along with an annotated score of the first London publication, return to his purview some 12 years later in a commission from Baron van Swieten. Court librarian in fashionable Hapsburg Vienna and a great admirer of Handel's music, van Swieten could not but aspire to import and improve the latest trends from London, such as the 1784 Abbey *Messiah*. He thus in February 1789 engaged the ever-impecunious Mozart to re-orchestrate four of Handel's oratorios, including *Messiah*.

Mozart's orchestration

Mozart's reworking of *Messiah* would transform Handel's original baroque orchestra effortlessly into its classical Viennese successor with the latest wind instruments in a section comprised of five pairs (flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons and horns) harmonically complete, with trumpets and trombones in addition. Taking to the task of augmenting Handel's original score with relish, Mozart, however, could hardly have been expected simply to introduce a full complement of winds to Handel's original score (in which none appeared) and to deploy them only

51

M. Aria.

Jesajas IX. 2

Larghetto.

Flauto.

Clarinetti in A.

Fagotti.

Violino II.

Viola.

Violino I.

Basso.

Bassi.

A

Dunkeln wandelt, im
dark - - - ness, that

Dun. kein wan - - deln,
walked in dark - - ness,

das Volk, das im Dunkeln, im
peo-ple that walked, that

Dunkeln wandelt, es
walked in darkness have

sieht ein grosses Licht, es
seen a great light, have

sieht ein grosses Licht, ein
seen a great light, the

das Volk, das im Dunkeln, im
peo-ple that walked, that

Dun. kein wandelt, es
walked in darkness have

▲ Mozart's orchestration of *Messiah* supplements the unison string writing in 'The people that walked in darkness' with full harmonisation in the winds

as an orchestral ripieno doubling the strings. Quite possibly encouraged by his commissioner to allow his imagination free reign, Mozart swiftly set in motion his own fanciful musical commentary. His method of composition as pre-ordained by van Swieten entailed ‘filling in’ blank wind staves provided in a fresh score – a Grundpartitur – provided by one of van Swieten’s copyists. It included Handel’s original *basso continuo* line as a footprint, with sufficient blank staves above for the new wind parts along with Handel’s original upper strings copied in above the blank staves. Less clear than the visual evidence of the compositional

process, however, lies the hidden hand of van Swieten as overall commissioner/editor. Only Part III of Mozart's autograph survives today in the Lobkowitz archives in Prague. For the remainder of 'Mozart's' *Messias* we are reliant on a set of parts, also in Prague, and a fair copy of Mozart's autograph prepared by van Swieten's scriptorium (as well as a further set of parts), both extant in the Nationalbibliothek in Vienna.

Mozart's interventions occur on a number of different levels. The most obvious and straightforward are as a tutti/ripieno support, fortifying the orchestra for (larger) choral forces. Examples are frequent such

MESSIAH: 2

as in the opening chorus 'And the glory', where the winds essentially double strings or choral parts or both. In arias, however, Handel's open-string texture surrounding the solo voice gives more space for Mozart to fill out, and thus, again typically, in 'Ev'ry valley' although the simple ripieno function is employed at the opening, 15 bars later the winds are in dialogue with the strings in a completely new gesture implanted into the phrase by Mozart. The process expands in arias like 'The people that walked', where the

unison strings of Handel's unembellished original get a full four-part harmonic realisation in the winds, as if conceived by Brahms for a late organ prelude. Finally, in arias where Handel had not included a viola part, such as 'Rejoice greatly', Mozart again fills in the gap, either with a new independent voice or a viola *col basso* in the earlier baroque style (or both).

A number of questions yet to be posed concern the cuts made to Handel's original. They, for example, include the chorus 'Let

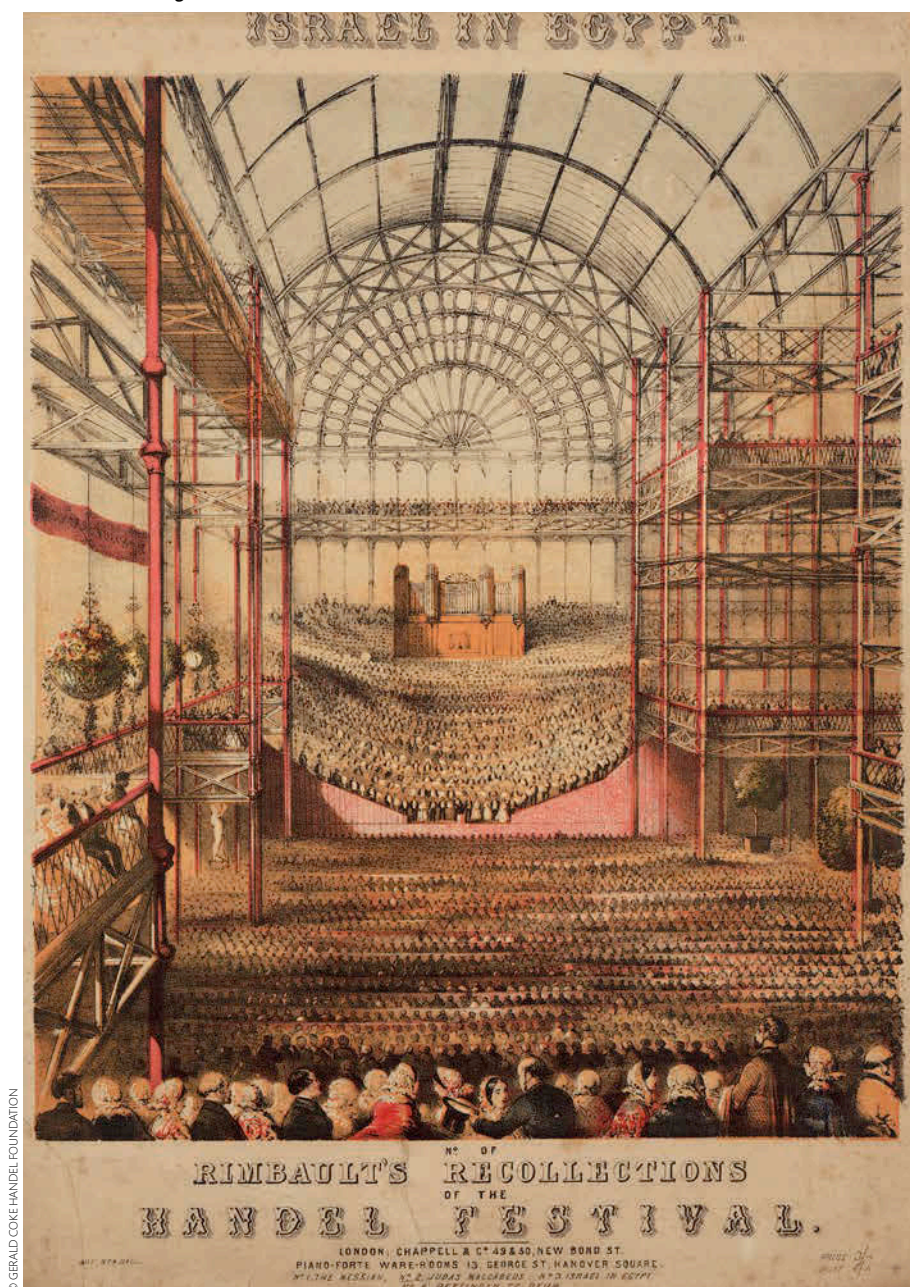
all the angels, though (nonsensically) not its preceding recitative. Had a page in the manuscript copy been lost at some early stage? Mozart's intriguing *accompagnato* replacement of the final aria 'If God be for us' seems a capricious afterthought to the cutting of Handel's original aria. Had (presumably) van Swieten, in proposing/authorising a cut from 'But thanks be to God' to 'Worthy is the Lamb', not noticed that without the aria there would be an ungainly harmonic descent from a root-position E flat major ending 'But thanks be to God' to a root position D major for 'Worthy is the Lamb'? Mozart's solution to this apparent oversight in an entirely un-Handelian gesture foreshadows *Die Zauberflöte* and the Requiem in just 14 bars. Perhaps cleverly intended as his own signature to 'his *Messias*' as he handed his work over to van Swieten, it was a trademark that would be removed editorially in the process of first publication in 1803.

A German-language version

One less felicitous matter confronting van Swieten – and similarly blighting Mozart-*Messias* editors ever since – was the challenge of creating a German-language underlay that does not distort the melodic/rhythmic contour of the original vocal lines. Existing versions in German leading up to Mozart's 1789 commission were largely built on paraphrased material from Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock's 1828 epic poem *Der Messias* as adapted by Christoph Ebling some nine years before Mozart began work. Van Swieten and his editorial team then revised the text further, before and after incorporating it into the new edition as evidenced in the parts, while Mozart, however – contrary to received wisdom – had no involvement or perhaps concern with the choice or suitability of the text nor of his skill in underlay.

By extraordinary and propitious coincidence – and apparently unbeknown to van Swieten and subsequent editors – an outstanding German version of Jennens's original did (and does) exist independently of the Klopstock/Ebling text. Commissioned for a performance in Weimar in 1780 by none other than the poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe of his fellow man of letters, Johann Gottfried Herder, its starting point was neither Klopstock nor the Luther Bible,

▼ Rimbault's 1859 cover for *Israel in Egypt* depicts the Handel Festival at Crystal Palace, and demonstrates how Handel's choral music was performed by increasingly large choirs. In 1926, the choir for *Messiah* involved a choir of 3,500 singers



but Jennens's original text. Herder saw in it 'a sensitivity, yet a power to animate the whole of religion' and one that must edify the German people as much as the English: 'the voices from the choir of Heaven and Earth, sounding together in the silent hearts of mankind' ... (as he described the 'Hallelujah' chorus). After 1780, sadly his remarkable text disappeared without trace, only to be found a century later buried deep in an edition of his complete works, most probably because it – scandalously for the time – ranked the text of Jennens's libretto above the Luther Bible. It will be published next year in the new Breitkopf edition of *Der Messias* 1789, for a first time in print with Mozart's orchestration.

Mozart's *Der Messias* transported Handel's *Messiah* into the symphonic era

From Vienna back to London

Mozart's *Der Messias* thus transported Handel's *Messiah* into the symphonic era in Breitkopf's first publication in 1803. Completed weeks after van Swieten's death that same year – with final editorial decisions made by Hiller (who replaced Mozart's *accompanato* 'If God be for us' with his own curious orchestration of Handel's original aria, with solo bassoon replacing Handel's tutti violins!), it was to become the benchmark for a *Messiah* orchestral performance until the 20th century. Its appeal, too, spread swiftly back to England, and by 1850, when the London Handel Society published its new edition of *Messiah*, its editor, Edward Rimbault, noted the necessity of including Mozart's revised orchestration in addition to Handel's original:

... it has been thought advisable, in producing a new edition of the Score of the *Messiah*, to include the Additional Accompaniments of Mozart. This has materially increased the size of the volume, and the labour of editorship. But as the Council of the Handel Society had availed themselves of the talents of Mendelssohn, in constructing an independent Organ part for the Score of *Israel in Egypt*, it would have been hardly prudent to have rejected Mozart's magnificent additions, which are now everywhere received as an integral part of the work.

By the turn of the 20th century, however, Friedrich Chrysander, editor of the German Handel Society's complete works, brought his mammoth enterprise to conclusion with a first critical edition of *Messiah* based on the autograph. Dispensing entirely with Mozart's orchestration, it restored Handel's original work (derived from the composer's final London performances) and became in 1902 Breitkopf's second *Messiah* publication. That same year – perhaps intentionally – Ebenezer Prout, editor for Novello, offered the British world a newly revised edition of *Messiah* with little or no mention of Handel's original, but with instead a fastidious appetite for the 'correct' realisation and enhancement of Mozart's orchestration firmly asserting that:

... the attempts made from time to time by our musical societies to give Handel's music as he meant it to be given must – however earnest the intention, and however careful the preparation – be fore-doomed to failure from the very nature of the case. With our large choral societies, additional accompaniments of some kind are a necessity for an effective performance; and the question is not so much whether, as how they are to be written.

From the 18th to 21st centuries

Prout, it is worth noting, consistently printed Mozart's wind parts in reduced point-size in the arias, as if he considered them optional. Interestingly, a recent study by Hannah McGlaughlin has shown that Mack Wilberg (OUP composer and director of the Tabernacle Choir) has used Prout in precisely this way in a current unpublished performing edition of *Messiah*: eliminating the more conspicuous Mozartean wind interpolations in the arias, but taking advantage of their added weight to the strings in the choral movements. Though recorded, he has not yet published his edition. Can this, one wonders, be a trend yet to be explored by choirs requiring larger orchestral support?

The orchestral suitability of Mozart's *Messiah* over the original remained largely unchallenged in the English-speaking

world until Watkins Shaw's (still current) 1959 edition for Novello. Shaw referenced all the then-known 18th-century material while banishing any traces of Mozart completely. The decades following then saw the rise of period vocal ensembles and the modern baroque orchestra. Together – at first imperceptibly – they have steadily supplanted the grand symphonic *Messiah* of the Malcolm Sargent era, along with its reliance on Mozart's 'commentary' as collateral damage.

But *Messiah* is a perennial work, one – as indeed Mozart's orchestration shows – that defies any single authority or authenticity. *Messiah*'s innate flexibility in choir size still makes it a unique work for myriad performances: from those of small professional choirs all the way up to the holiday celebrations of the sing-along massed chorus. Mozart's orchestral contribution to *Messiah*, a late and brilliant 18th-century critique on a baroque original, not only immortalised the oratorio after the baroque, it also established unwittingly the great Anglo-German oratorio tradition. Its noble successors Haydn's *Creation* – which van Swieten also masterminded – as well as Mendelssohn's *Elijah* some 50 years later, anchored the oratorio as the main staple of the 19th-century choral tradition from which much more would follow. Now – especially with the re-emergence of the period classical orchestra, and a new critical edition in 2020 – the fitting return of Mozart's seminal *Messiah* may be imminent. ■

Messiah 1741 (Handel's original autograph version), edited by Malcolm Bruno and Caroline Ritchie, was first published by Breitkopf & Härtel in autumn 2018. *Messias* 1789 (Mozart's orchestration) is scheduled for publication by Breitkopf in autumn 2020.

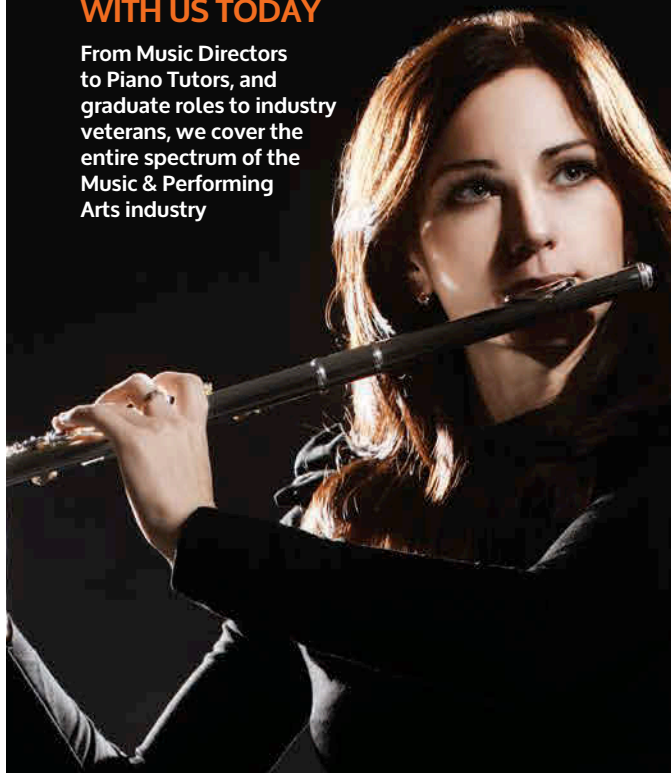
Recently visiting scholar at Princeton, musicologist Malcolm Bruno is editor of a number of major choral publications for Breitkopf & Härtel and Bärenreiter Verlag. An independent producer for BBC and Public Radio International in the US, since 2004 he has been artistic director of Larvik Barokk in Norway, where he also chairs the board of the ensemble Barokksolistene.

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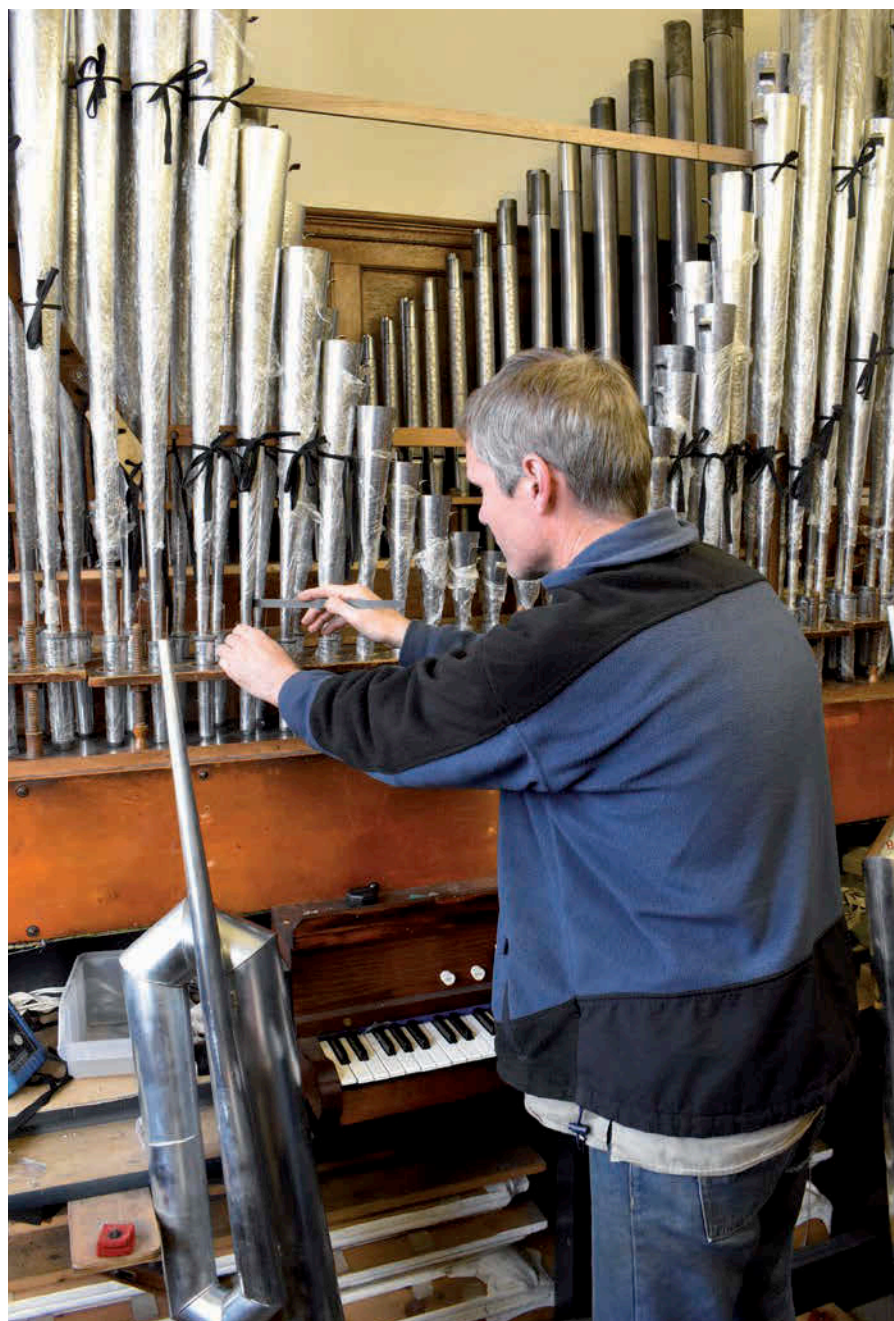
Work in progress

Taking over the reins of a dynastic firm widely regarded as the greatest name in English organ building brings with it a heavy sense of historical responsibility. **Graeme Kay** meets David Wyld and his team of craftsmen at Henry Willis & Sons, as they look confidently to the future. PHOTOGRAPHY BY GRAEME KAY

Some would call it 'baggage'. But a glance at the room in the Rotunda works in Liverpool, lined with meticulously detailed physical records dating back to the earliest days of the Henry Willis company, is both daunting and yet inspiring for those who are now the stewards of the company's past – and future.

The long family history of Henry Willis & Sons – builders of the celebrated organs in Liverpool's St George's Hall and Anglican Cathedral, the Royal Albert Hall, Reading Town Hall, Salisbury, Truro and Westminster Cathedrals – is well documented.* And it is not insignificant that the largest number of organs featured in Daniel Moul's DVD survey *The English Organ* (see *C&O*, December 2019) are by the firm founded by Henry 'Father' Willis (1821-1901), in continuous operation since 1845, and with an opus list of over 2,500 organs up to the present day.

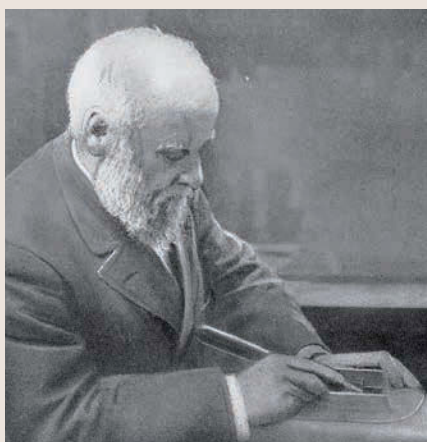
Managing director David Wyld's history with the company dates back to his time as a 15-year-old regular visitor to the firm who later, tired of academic life, went on to acquire business experience running a car restoration company (he remains an enthusiastic owner of vintage Rolls-Royces) and as the proprietor and producer of Mirabilis Records, which specialised in organ discs. Such varied experience proved invaluable in turning around a family-run company which – as was widely recognised – by the 1970s had become intellectually, personally and commercially exhausted. Finally handed the reins in 1997 when he was appointed as MD by Henry Willis IV, Wyld set about restructuring; looking at



► Gergely Szabo voices a new Tuba 8ft

Henry Willis & Sons Ltd – how it all began

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COURTESY HENRY WILLIS & SONS LTD



COURTESY HENRY WILLIS & SONS LTD



▲ Like father, like son: (from left) Henry 'Father' Willis voicing; Henry II; Henry III and Henry IV in the voicing shop

Henry Willis (1821-1901) was the leading organ builder of the Victorian era. By his death, he had built organs nationwide for cathedrals in Canterbury, Carlisle, Durham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Gloucester, Hereford, Lincoln, Oxford, St David's, Salisbury, Truro, Wells, and, pre-eminently, St Paul's Cathedral, London. He flourished within a period when organ building was greatly expanding. Throughout the 19th century, the growing preference in parish churches was for an organ and choir, and the construction of many new municipal concert halls, as well as halls with grand ambitions such as the Royal Albert Hall, required the building of dozens of instruments – a fertile breeding ground for the technical innovations which both served and acted as a spur for the craft, and business, of organ building.

Apprenticed to John Gray in 1835, Willis had set up shop on his own in Camden, London by the early 1840s. Aged 30, he exhibited an organ in the 1851 Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace to a curious specification, archaic in some ways and advanced in others. It featured 70 speaking stops, but also innovative thumb pistons, and improved pneumatic action. The impression made gained him a commission to build a new organ for St George's Hall, Liverpool (1855), regarded as his masterpiece, while the Exhibition organ went in reduced but improved form to Winchester Cathedral (1854). An office and works were established at Liverpool in 1854, with a major factory, the Rotunda Organ Works, established in Camden in 1866. Among the hundreds of instruments

Willis subsequently built, the large-scale organs in the Albert Hall (1871) and Alexandra Palace (1873) cemented his reputation as the Brunel of the organ building profession.

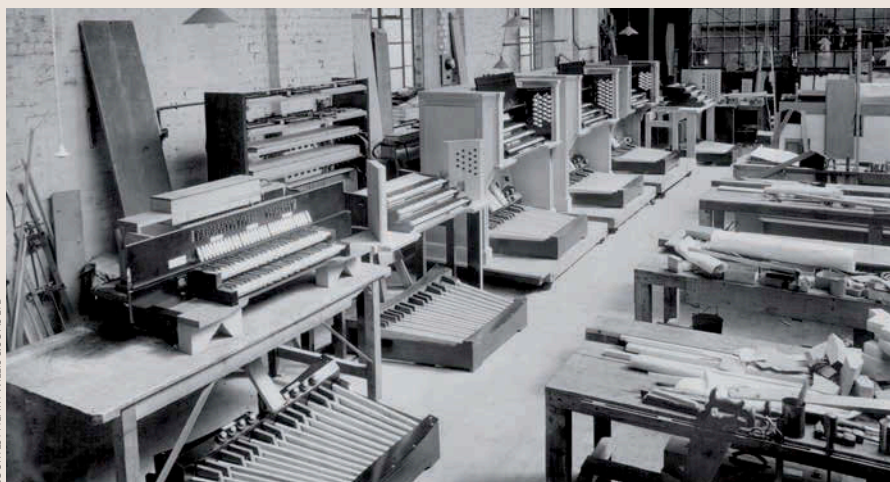
Willis took his sons, Henry II (1852-1927) and Vincent (1848-1928), into partnership in 1878. By the end of his career, Willis was described as 'the greatest organ builder of the Victorian Era', and was henceforth to be known as 'Father' Willis. He retained complete control of the company and was active up to his death. When he died leaving debts of £15,000, his sons quarrelled, one wanting the company to be wound up to clear the debts and the other wanting to continue. The debt made it difficult for Willis & Sons to offer competitive prices – potential customers began to turn to less well-known companies for important contracts. But there was also a general decline in the trade.

By building thousands of organs of high quality, the Victorian builders had flooded the market, and a great period of church building was over. After the massive new organ at St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin (1902), the Willis company would build only two further landmark organs: Liverpool Anglican Cathedral (1926) and Westminster Roman Catholic Cathedral (1932).

In 1919 the company had moved to Brixton and merged with Lewis & Co. The company was briefly known as Henry Willis & Sons and Lewis & Co. to satisfy a legal point, then reverted to Henry Willis & Sons. The company has been in continuous operation ever since, and until 1997 was still run by descendants of Willis. In that year, Henry Willis IV appointed David Wyld as managing director. He remains in this role as majority shareholder in the company.

▼ Consoles being built in the console shop, May 1953

COURTESY HENRY WILLIS & SONS LTD



◀ the company's nationwide tuning round (which had been almost 6,000 tunings each year at its peak) and network of branch offices, it was clear that the company's HQ in Petersfield, Hampshire, was no longer in the right place – the road north beckoned. But the firm's ambition to be reborn in a purpose-built factory was frustrated by surging land values; eventually settling in Liverpool, first of all in the former Triumph TR7 factory at Speke, the iconic and portable 'Rotunda' name (which goes back to the firm's former Camden base in an old engine shed similar to the Roundhouse) was bestowed on a large building in St Anne Street, a location itself steeped in organ building history – Wyld bought the building and its contents from the liquidators of the defunct firm of Rushworth & Dreaper.

The story of Wyld's path to ultimate control and ownership of the firm must await a detailed modern study of the Willis

company history; but, sitting in his 'heritage' office, the wood panelling betokening the grandeur of times gone by, and lined with portraits of the Willis family dynasty, Wyld is at pains to stress that, from his teenage years onwards, he feels as embedded in the company as would any organ builder of the family's own distinguished bloodline.

'The day I took over there was not a single new order in the book,' he explains. 'The firm was just fading away. So I dug out the previous five years' worth of prospect files and started making telephone calls. After the first day I had three jobs, within four weeks we had six months' work; soon it stretched to two years. As with all organ builders, the business is about managing the expectations and timelines of clients while trying to avoid spikes and troughs, which can be hard to manage in a business which is heavy on overhead. Where we are now is that we're looking four years ahead.'

The current strength of the order book is readily apparent by walking the spacious floor of a building Wyld was able to expand by acquiring an adjoining engineering shop which fortuitously came up for sale. Tradition is everywhere, from the company's own casting room to many artefacts such as 'Father' Willis's original pipe scale boards – still in use today – which laid the foundations of consistent quality control as the company's expansion in the 19th century presaged techniques of mass production; and outside the casting room stands a reed-curving machine, dating from about 1878, designed by 'Father' Willis's inventor son, Vincent. Filling the No.1 voicing machine is a Tuba 8ft tended by Gergely Szabo, an organ builder from Hungary who arrived eight years ago and has now made Liverpool his home – Willis are proud to have supplied the Solo Tubas and a French Horn for Kuhn's magnificent ▶

▼ (clockwise, from below) David Wyld, Joe Wakefield, Bob Hailwood, the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall console, Danny Jenkins





▲ (clockwise, from top left) The T.C. Lewis organ destined for St Andrews, Steve Bannon, George Rawlinson, Phil Jones, Fred Preston

reconstruction of the Steinmeyer Organ in Nidaros Cathedral, Trondheim, and these gleaming specimens, made from metal cast on the premises, are destined for the new Kuhn organ in the Tonhalle, Zurich: stacked outside are Trompette Orchestrale pipes for the Tonhalle organ and in the past year or so the firm has also supplied Kuhn with Tubas for the Hofkirche in Lucerne and a Corno di Bassetto for a church in Freiburg, Germany.

Occupying the main part of the floor is the rebuilt II/21 'Father' Willis organ (1875) for Liverpool Blue Coat School; behind it is the console for the Rushworth & Dreaper organ of Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, the entire instrument which it controls having been extracted in record time during a brief lull in the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra's busy schedule – after a full restoration it is due back next year, taking advantage of another nerve-shredding two-week window in the RLPO's concert calendar: 'We will have

teams working round the clock for that one,' notes Wyld. Nearby, Phil Jones is putting the finishing touches to a radiating-and-concave pedal board – in his book *Father Henry Willis*, W.L. Sumner recalls that the founder was a musician first and organ builder second: 'His excellent technique on the pedal-boards of

'I've reversed the past 70 years of history' – David Wyld

his own design was a thing to be marvelled at, and was in advance of that of most professional organists, to many of whom he gave demonstrations and instruction.' Although he always credited S.S. Wesley with the idea, 'it was Willis's own playing which helped to make this type of board practically universal in this country.'

Next to the R&D console is an example of the famous 'Scudamore' generic organ. Inspired by 'Father' Willis's friend, the Revd Dr John Baron of Upton Scudamore, these usually three-stop organs were designed to offer a significant step up from the harmonium in village churches – Willis built around 200 of them.

The Willis workforce, some full- and others part-time, today comprises a mix of career organ builders including three apprentices, supplemented by craftsmen, a finance director (Jonathan Bowden) and manager (Philip Cooper) who have brought skills from other walks of life, all bound together under the enthusiastic vision of David Wyld, whose practical skills extend beyond pipe-making and voicing to designing case-work. At benches dotted round the floor, Danny Jenkins is restoring the case woodwork, and Steve Bannon is soldering pipes, for the Blue Coat organ; Joe

Wakefield is making tuning slides; George Rawlinson is re-leathering pipe stoppers for the organ of St James-the-Less (Episcopal) in Penicuik, Midlothian; Fred Preston is fashioning wires for trackers; James Matheson is attending to pipe tuning and Sam Braddock is delving into the electrics of the Philharmonic Hall organ.

Walking past a stockpile of sustainable hardwoods, including cedar for Open Woods laid down by Henry Willis II – ‘the firm used to buy in timber by the shipload’, notes Wyld – a pass-door gives access to the ‘B’ shop. Here, Bob Hailwood is re-leathering bellows for the Philharmonic Hall organ, and almost ready for shipment is a restored T.C. Lewis organ of 1862, destined for the new, £12.5m Laidlaw Music Centre at the University of St Andrews.

Aside from bread-and-butter restorations, notable recent achievements of the revived

Willis company include: the transfer of a redundant 1892 ‘Father’ Willis organ from Birkenhead to the Hooglandse Kerk in Leiden, Holland; an almost-completely new organ in the ‘Father’ Willis tradition for St Matthew-in-the-City, Auckland, NZ; and an all-new II/25 mechanical organ for the Episcopal Church of St James in Florence; another new build is in prospect for St Barnabas in Jericho, Oxford.

So what is the Willis company proposition now? Notwithstanding the individual successes of later generations of Willises, the current zeitgeist of organ building, which places high value on ‘original’ tonal concepts, and renewed interest in and respect for the achievements of the company’s founder, seems now to be underpinning the future. ‘I’ve reversed the past 70 years of history, really,’ says Wyld. ‘If you have a perfect recipe, you don’t change it. But we’re not

about merely reproducing “Father” Willis – we’re the same company, using many of the original tools, and our new instruments are a continuation of the tradition.’ ■

www.willis-organs.com

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Graeme Kay is a former editor of Classical Music, Opera Now and BBC Music magazines. He is a digital platforms producer for BBC Radio 3 and 4.

▼ Pride of place: the staff of Henry Willis & Sons with the Blue Coat School's 1875 'Father' Willis organ



RAISING STANDARDS

As we approach the 250th anniversary of the birth of Beethoven, **David Hill** returns to his column to give pointers on conducting the composer's *Missa solemnis*

The *Missa solemnis*, written between 1819 and 1823, is one of Beethoven's largest works, alongside the Ninth Symphony and his opera *Fidelio*. Beethoven conducted the premiere in St Petersburg in 1824, by which time he was completely deaf. Sadly, he was able to conduct only part of the performance and never 'heard' what this, or the Ninth Symphony, sounded like except in his own head. Let us be mindful and respectful that profoundly deaf people do not necessarily consider this a disadvantage. Nevertheless, the creative genius of Beethoven must surely have been frustrated as he reached the height of his artistic expression.

The *Missa* requires a large orchestra: strings, double wind, 4 horns, 2 trumpets,

timpani and organ, alongside four soloists. It lasts nearly 90 minutes and contains some of the most challenging writing for all participating, especially the choir. Approaching any performance of this work, I would strongly advise conductors to re-examine or become familiar with the late Haydn Masses, from which Beethoven gained so much inspiration; also his earlier Mass in C, op.86 (1807), similar in length to the Haydn Masses (40-50 minutes) and, in many aspects, the precursor to the *Missa solemnis*.

As we enter 2020, and many will be looking forward to performing the work, here is a brief overview – directed more to conductors preparing scores – of a work I adore, but one that I know presents constant, immense challenges for all involved.



COURTESY DAVID HILL

Performance considerations

When deciding to mount a performance of the *Missa*, there are many aspects to consider.

Venue This will always be a central issue: even with reduced string strength, there needs to be ample room for all the performers.

Choir It really is a choral *tour de force* and not for the faint-hearted! Singers will always moan about Beethoven's choral writing as 'too high and too fast'. My response has always included some measure of sympathy but that Beethoven shares, with J.S. Bach and others, an uncompromising approach to his demands as a composer, and it is our task to respond, as best as we can, to the challenges. However, if a choir does not easily cope with fast, high and virtuosic, they are not going to feel comfortable taking this on.

Soloists There are many fine singers able to produce a wonderful result and who have performed the *Missa* many times. But if you have a very limited budget, my advice would be to locate recently graduated music college students and provide them the opportunity of learning this remarkable work. Whichever route is adopted, it will be essential to have a 'soloists only' rehearsal prior to the concert or earlier on the concert day, bearing in mind vocal fatigue.

Orchestra and pitch Most will expect to engage an orchestra of freelance players

with modern instruments. This is totally understandable and will, hopefully, work fine. While it is a demanding work, the orchestral writing in the *Missa* is not as exacting as it is in the Ninth Symphony, for the main and obvious reason that its role is to accompany the choir and soloists. The downside of using modern instruments is two-fold: pitch and style. Even if an orchestra is tuned to A=440 (normal, standardised pitch) at the beginning of each half of the concert, most instruments will rise in pitch during the performance. Any of this makes it extremely high for the singers, who will be sure to divulge their opinions!

Period instruments This is a more expensive route but, for me, more interesting and exploratory. The players come with a knowledge of the style, and with instruments and sounds that Beethoven would have expected. Add to that the lower 'classical' pitch of A=430: that downward shift enables singers to feel more comfortable. Whatever ensemble is chosen, be sure parts are bowed in advance.

Editions

The most up-to-date scholarship will be found in Carus or Bärenreiter: I have happily used Peters on many occasions and realise there are fewer discrepancies between the editions than in many other works. My choice would be Carus, for its excellent clarity of printing.

Kyrie

A blazing opening burst of D major, for all instrumentalists, is how Beethoven opens this dramatic setting of the Mass. A stately 2 in a bar with minim = c.60 is about right. Throughout the opening, there is a sense of suspense and ambiguity as the music unfolds inexorably into the first choral entry, 'Kyrie'. One can sense that Beethoven was revelling in the arrival of the clarinets which take such an important, leading role in the woodwinds. Exaggerate the dynamics! To engage a truly dramatic aspect to the performance, the importance of the dynamic levels is crucial: everything from *pp* to *ff* needs everyone to engage in the wide and rapid changes Beethoven demands.

The *Christe* is in 3/2 and needs to relate to the opening tempo, the pulse increasing by a third to minim = 90. When singing 'Christe', almost invariably the 'Chr' sounds too late and without sufficient energy. The rule here is the vowel 'i' needs to sound on the beat. Tempo I is re-established for the 'Kyrie'.

Gloria

For this *Allegro vivace*, a speed of crotchet = c.180 seems comfortable. The tempo can also be determined by looking further within the movement to bar 43, which should feel 1 in a bar. It is an example – one of many –

where Beethoven calms the mood merely by lengthening note values while retaining the tempo. Bar 66 is back to 3 in a bar, but small, incisive beating will help here, as too much arm movement will disrupt the flow. We're still in the land of massive contrasts in dynamics, and conductors need to prepare sufficiently in advance of any changes.

The beat before any new dynamic marking needs to show the change. Singers will need to be reminded of the importance of *sforzando* which, in Beethoven, is an accented note.

Meno allegro can drop in pace to crotchet = c.160 while retaining 1 in a bar, with an immediate switch back to 180/3 at bar 174. Bar 185 is marked *fff* – a rare moment, which needs to be startling.

The tempo for the *Larghetto* section is related to the previous (c.180) and now becomes quaver = c.60. It should work seamlessly but should not be faster, as the varied rhythms and their angularity need time to work.

Conducting in a clear, composed 4 in a bar is crucial for the choir, soloists and orchestra to feel confident about their many challenges through this section.

'Quoniam tu solus' / *Allegro maestoso* is a straightforward transition to manage. The quaver 60 should double in speed to c.120 and the crotchet pulse in 3/4. Retaining such tempo relationships is critical as it is historically accurate. The tenors might need help with the first phrase: adding altos might help.

In bar 360, the *Allegro ma non troppo* is a difficult speed to set. It represents the beginning of the final section of the Gloria in which there are two further shifts in tempo as Beethoven increases the intensity and excitement. *Allegro ma non troppo* – not too fast – I would suggest is a warning that too much pace at this point will affect the sense of increasing drama and intensity Beethoven is creating. Aim to be around crotchet = c.140-160, which will still allow sufficient time for shaping the material in the fugue. *Poco più allegro* (a little faster) at bar 459 is as if Beethoven suddenly, and quietly, turns up the heat: it is now time to move, with minim = c.104 still allowing the quavers time and precision to be articulated. Singers will have started to show fatigue by this stage, so communicating encouragement and belief in this final stretch is vital.

In the final section, the *Presto* is 1 in a bar, c.76 and should sound exhilarating and joyous, as well as being thoroughly exhausting for all concerned!

Credo

A firm, declamatory opening – *Allegro ma non troppo* – is needed for this affirmation of faith: crotchet = c.132 works without sounding hurried or being too slow. By this stage in the work the style of phrasing, the extended use of dynamics, understanding of the interactive counterpoint and exchange of material should be established: Beethoven's markings are clear and explicit. At bar 86 it is 2 in a bar.

The *Adagio* section at bar 124 works well if the crotchet pulse is slightly under half the speed of the previous section (c.64). It shouldn't sound hurried, given the detailed and fast-moving woodwind writing in this section. 'Et incarnatus est' is a moment for all tenors and basses to be in unison in this most sacred moment in the Mass, expressing Christ's passing.

The *Andante* at bar 144 needs to move on, only to be followed bars later by *Adagio espressivo*. These 31 bars are some of the toughest to bring off. It is as if Beethoven dismantles normal phrase structures in place of sharp, off-beat outbursts of orchestral unrest to suggest the intense grief of the crucifixion. It is a section notorious for everyone to keep track of exactly where they are: it requires thorough and careful rehearsing.

'Et Resurrexit' requires tenors, on their own for two bars, to proclaim the resurrection. It might be necessary to add altos, as it needs to sound strong, joyous and, above all, certain. A tempo of c.126 will work for the following *Allegro molto*. This is fast, but makes sense when the *Allegro* returns (as in the opening) to c.132.

The *Allegretto* at 'Et vitam venturi' can relax in tempo for the singers to feel able to nurture their lines during what is a brilliantly constructed fugue: a pulse of c.80 works well here. This is interrupted at bar 372, *Allegro con moto*, which requires a sudden leap in speed; this needs to happen immediately on the third beat of the bar, to c.120. With a well-trained choir this will work, but any faster will be a risk.

A marking of *Grave* at bar 433 opens the final section, and I suggest halving the tempo.

At this relatively gentle pace, detail can emerge unhurried. The ending is difficult to manage, as Beethoven combines some of the fastest note values alongside some of the slowest. For overall ensemble to be maintained, the pulse must remain constant.

Sanctus

Beethoven's is a quiet, reverential setting in awe of the text 'Holy, holy': it needs to sound calm, at quaver = 76. *Allegro pesante* needs to move on to c.114 to provide a clear relationship for the following 'Hosanna' section. As so often in classical Masses, understanding the relationship between minim and dotted minim is crucial; so the 'Hosanna' should be 1 in a bar.

Benedictus

I always work closely with the solo violinist, who shouldn't feel hurried but neither should it drag. I aim for a pulse that equals c.54. The pauses are not easy to handle technically: always retain the overall shape of 4 in a bar.

Agnus Dei

Continuing the mood of calm and stillness, it's too easy to think of the same speed; but this needs to be slightly faster than the Benedictus even though marked *Adagio*. An *Adagio* in the early 1800s is quite different from how it was regarded by the end of that century. In classical times it was clearly faster and closer to an *Andante* (as we know it) and a pulse of 69 edging forwards at the *Allegretto* 'Dona nobis' works well.

Allegro assai is, roughly, double speed, returning to tempo 1 (76) at bar 190. These important tempo relationships continue when the *Presto* at bar 266 is 1 in a bar (76). The music is getting faster but always retaining the same pulse. During the *Presto* it is important to grasp the phrase structures: Beethoven is in turmoil and questioning any granting of peace. Thinking three- or six-bar phrases will help to give structure to the performance. The final adjustment, in feel only, is in bar 354 when the frenetic feel of the *Presto* gives way to our original 76 dotted crotchet pulse and resigned tranquillity. It all feels as if Beethoven, perhaps like the rest of us, has been searching for faith. It ends where it began, in D major, and with a sense of optimism ■



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Though known for his symphonies, concertos and sonatas in particular, Beethoven wrote an early fugue for the organ which **David Goode** recommends wholeheartedly

This tutorial is an interesting assignment. We are considering a minor work by a major master: namely, Ludwig van Beethoven, born 250 years ago this year. It is also an early work, written when he was 13 (although one copy mentions 11 years, this is probably false and is to do with the over-promotion of the young Beethoven by his rather unscrupulous father). Any juvenile work of a great composer can be instructive, and this is particularly the case here, since one of Beethoven's main musical activities as a teenager was playing the organ – as it was with Schubert and Chopin, soon afterwards.

Beethoven learned the organ as a young boy, but it was when he acquired the services of Christian Neeffe as his teacher that he really flourished, both at the organ, and in composition and general musicianship. Beethoven deputised as an organist for Neeffe at the court chapel in Bonn from 1782, and gradually assumed more responsibility, for example when Neeffe was away. He then applied for a small promotion in 1784, and to an extent this was granted, amid a rather complex political situation concerning the new Elector. The Fugue in D dates from this period, and may have formed part of an audition for the new position.

In due course Beethoven's organ playing increasingly took a back seat as his piano playing took over, although there are some charming works for the musical clock organ, in the tradition of Haydn and Mozart. Through the 19th and 20th centuries there was quite a lot of mystery and confusion about his music for organ,



David Goode is organist at Eton College, which he combines with an international concert career. His complete Bach recordings are being released on Signum Classics

and in particular what was by Beethoven, and also what was or wasn't written for the instrument. Wheldon Whipple, in his book *Beethoven's Organ Works: A Study* (originally a Master's dissertation, now published) talks through the issues in some detail.

A useful mainstream edition of the Fugue is Ludwig Altman's for Hinrichsen, which collects it together with the Three Pieces for a mechanical organ and the Two Preludes through all the keys, op.39. The only thing to be wary of is that Altman has added dynamics and manual changes, as well as some suggested articulations (though these are rightly kept in brackets). For the plain text, the 19th-century Complete Works edition is available on IMSLP and is certainly worth looking at (you need to be adept at reading soprano clef for the right hand). Altman describes the work rather crisply: 'This short work has the earmarks of a study and it would be futile to try to find indications of Beethoven's own personal style in it. But it is an effective work just the same.' It is indeed a brisk, assured and sturdy work, which Whipple compares if anything rather favourably to J.S. Bach's two-part Fugue in E minor from the *Well-Tempered Clavier*.

A number of interpretative questions arise. There is first the question of tempo. Beethoven marks 'Im geschwinder Bewegung' or 'swiftly moving along', with an *alla breve* time signature. Altman suggests minim = 120 which, although exciting, seems to my mind a touch lightweight in effect, and without that sturdiness (or, for that matter,

of the texture at the close from four notes to six and then to eight, suggests that at least at the end there should be some grandeur to the sound. So then the question is whether to build up gradually, or (bearing in mind that the young Beethoven probably wouldn't have had a registrant) to play it equally loudly all the way through, which is very

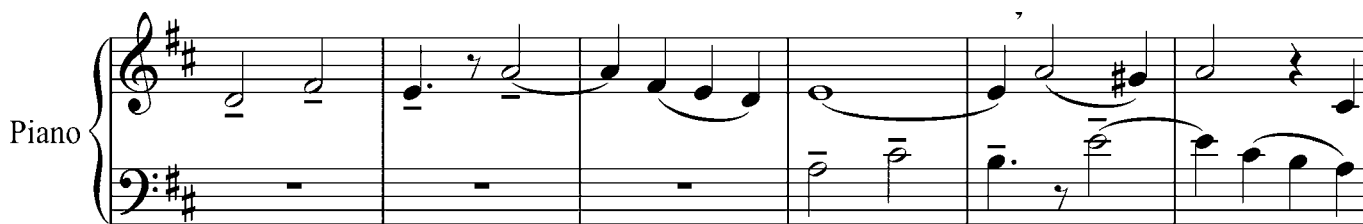
The engaging little grace notes in bars 52 and 65 can afford to be shaped elegantly

occasional lyricism) that is part of the piece's character. I would recommend minim = 100; but you can experiment.

Then we have registration. Beethoven doesn't mark anything, not even an opening dynamic; and unfortunately we don't know much about the organ in the court chapel in the 1780s. The ending of the Fugue, with its doubled dominant pedal and suggestions of *stretto*, and in particular the expanding

possible and in fact probably the most plausible option. Building up registrations wasn't a frequent part of organ performance until the 19th century; and yet in a piece like this I don't think I would rule it out entirely. Altman suggests mixture choruses on Great and Swell, and then to couple these over the dominant pedal, with a hairpin crescendo to *ff* in the last five bars. This is certainly possible; but an even larger crescendo

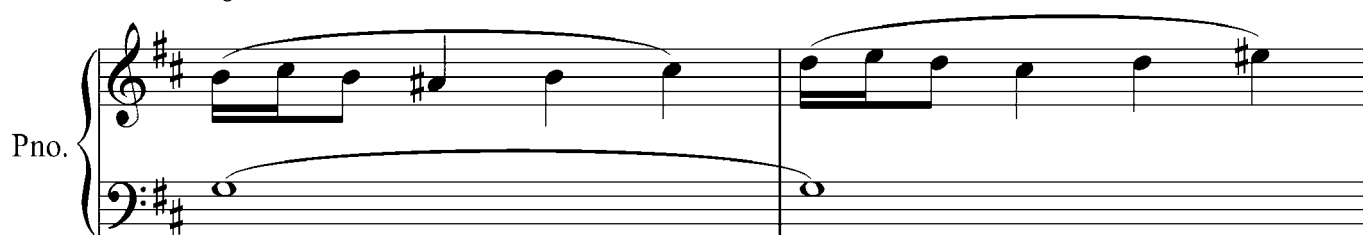
Ex.1 A slight break in the phrasing before the fourth note helps to accentuate the note tied over the barline



Ex.2a Begin the trills in bars 24 and 48-50 on the upper note, as is common in baroque music



Ex.2b In bars 36-37, begin the mordent on the lower note



◁ scheme could be employed, using manual changes, from a *mf* opening using, say, 8ft and 4ft foundation stops. Altman's scheme of manual changes, going to the Swell in bar 25 and back to the Great in 74, suffers slightly from the fact that most of the piece ends up on the subsidiary manual, although his suggestions for where to change and change back are sensible. Other possibilities for changing are the staggered entries of the subject at 38-42, 52-54 and 65-67. I should say, after all this, that I've heard the fugue played just on 8ft and 4ft flutes right to the end, and it is quite effective done that way, though it does need flutes of sufficient character and projection.

It is worth thinking a bit about articulation. Touch was gradually changing around this period, from *détaché* to *legato*, and I feel a mixture could be used here. (Beethoven marks very little, with just some slurs throughout the bar in 36 and 37, which should of course be observed.) The minims of the subject could either be slightly detached (my preference) or more

joined, but a slight break before the fourth note each time is probably justified in order to point up the syncopation – **Ex.1** shows a rough depiction of the touch I would use at the opening and in equivalent passages. Conjunct crotchets I would play with a clean *legato*, so I disagree with Altman's suggestion of staccato crotchets in bar 29 onwards, and later. (Staccato crotchets in 26 and 28 make more sense, however, since they are disjunct). One further option is to vary the articulation of the subject slightly according to context, so that some of the entries in the minor keys during the middle of the fugue might be played more smoothly to emphasise their lyrical aspect.

Beethoven includes some ornamentation. Again, we are at a slightly transitional phase in the 1780s, but on balance I would begin the trills in 24 and in 48-50 on the upper note, as is often the case in baroque and classical music [**Ex.2a**]. In 90 you could argue for beginning on the lower note, and I would do the same with the mordents in 36-37, although this is probably a matter of

taste [**Ex.2b**]. For all the longer trills, I like to include turns on the end.

Finally, *rubato*. The piece will certainly bear some – less so in the early stages, although you might enjoy the suspensions of bar 15 onwards a touch. Some of the entries of the subject can usefully be 'marked', since in a two-voice fugue it is sometimes harder to distinguish entries. Thus the *stretto* in the LH in 44 can be acknowledged; and an interesting example comes in 76-77, where we think the subject starts in 76, but soon realise that 77 turns out to be the true one, so 77 can be marked somewhat (as similarly can 81). The engaging little grace notes in 52 and 65, making a nod to three-part counterpoint, can afford to be shaped elegantly.

This piece deserves to be better known. It makes an excellent closing voluntary to a service, if something not too long is wanted, or an item tucked into a recital programme, particularly on a smaller organ where one is looking for repertoire. Here's to some new performances in Beethoven's anniversary year! ■

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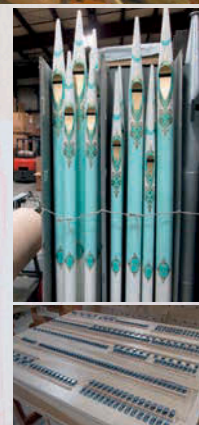
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NEARLY A CENTURY IN SERVICE TO AMERICA'S ORGAN BUILDERS



Unimaginable atrocities have shaken the Czech village of Lidice, but **Brian Morton** finds a gentle redemption in the musical heritage of Bohuslav Martinů and Alan Bush

On 27 May 1942, Reich-Protector Reinhard Heydrich, the man who four months earlier had chaired the Wannsee Conference which drew up plans for the Final Solution, was ambushed by Czech and Slovak soldiers in the Prague suburb of Libeň. Despite the intervention of Hitler's own doctor, who thought that Heydrich's post-operative fever could be

dealt with using the new sulfonamide drug – advice that wasn't taken – the 38-year-old rising star of the Third Reich died of sepsis. The fate of Jan Kubiš and Jozef Gabčík, who led Operation Anthropoid, the first government-sanctioned assassination of the war, is well enough known from films and books. There were, though, other, even darker outcomes.

Following reports that some of the assassination team were from the villages of Lidice, about 11 miles north-west of Prague, and Ležáky, a little further east, Hitler ordered that both communities be destroyed and every male over the age of 15 shot. In the event, the Nazi reprisals resulted in the deaths of 192 men, 60 women and 88 children, many of them killed in dynamited buildings. In Ležáky, 33 men and women were killed. Both villages were systematically dismantled and taken away by slave labour from works. Many of the women and some of the children were later taken to Ravensbrück concentration camp or gassed at Chełmno.

It is hard to find redemption in this story, but it is there. Ležáky no longer exists, but for a memorial stone, but Lidice was rebuilt after the war, at a little distance from the original site, and some 200 women and children returned. Today, Lidice is a pretty, intensely quiet little place, easily accessible from central Prague. It has an aura of sadness which is not just a matter of association, but seems to hang in the air. But there is also something else: a sense that even the worst atrocities cannot quell the human spirit. Lidice seized on the world's imagination in the way that would a similar massacre at Oradour in France. The Czech composer Bohuslav Martinů wrote an

▼ The old Lidice has been turned into a memorial site; in the new village, there's 'a sense that even the worst atrocities cannot quell the human spirit'



PETER STEHLÍK

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▲ A memorial to the 88 Lidice children who died at the hands of the Nazis; composers Bohuslav Martinů (l) and Alan Bush (r) dedicated pieces to the village of Lidice

orchestral *Memorial to Lidice*, a powerful piece in which colliding tonalities are never quite resolved, punctuated by Beethoven's 'Fate' motif and an old Czech hymn. It has been popular in the US in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Texas – states where the number of Czech descendants is high.

There is another musical remembrance of Lidice. The initiative to rebuild was actually British. The doctor and politician Barnett Stross (later a health secretary in the Wilson government) was profoundly moved by the massacre and in his home constituency of Stoke-on-Trent launched the 'Lidice Shall Live' movement. The Czech president Edvard Beneš, the Soviet ambassador, and the president of the Miners' Federation were all present at the Victoria Hall launch. Although the fact that Stross regarded the symbolic value of Lidice as a peace symbol was more important than any physical memorial, money was raised for a permanent memorial and for the rebuilding of workers' houses at Lidice. Someone else with a profound interest in working class solidarity also took notice: the composer Alan Bush.

In the early 80s, I got to know Alan well, and following a visit to his last home in Radlett, was able to sit with him in a television viewing room and watch flickering monochrome footage of him conducting his unaccompanied choral piece *Lidice*. It was performed by the Workers' Music Association on the site of the razed village. It remains one of the most beautiful choral pieces to emerge from the war. The libretto was written by the composer's wife, Nancy Bush. His only concern about the original

poem was that it ended on the word 'immortality', which Alan thought too weak syllabically and changed to 'immortal fame', allowing the piece to end on a sustained B major, having started in B Aeolian, and sustaining an air of dignified sorrow that somehow replicates the feeling of having wept for so long that tears are no longer necessary.

It may be that Alan objected to 'immortality' on other grounds. He was a lifelong Communist, and of a kind rarely encountered now. As a measure of his commitment to materialism – his string

of human stoicism and persistence, and a restoration of the lives of working people.

Older visitors can now say of the countryside around Lidice, like the countryside of central Scotland or parts of Yorkshire, that they can remember when *none* of this was green fields. To the defeat of fascism and slower retreat of state communism can now be added a slow withdrawal from fossil-fuelled industry, leaving once scarred and raw landscapes pristine again. Indeed, the presence of cherry trees and chestnuts round Lidice is almost as

Human life goes on at Lidice, responsive to nothing but the seasons

quartet *Dialectic* is perhaps his best-known non-operatic work – Alan stated in the opening chapter of his memoir collection *In My Eighth Decade* that, 'In 1934 I became convinced that the facts about life, including human life, and about the inorganic world from stellar galaxies to atoms and for that matter to other particles discovered by 20th-century nuclear physics, were convincingly explained or brilliantly foretold between the years 1844 and 1896 by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.' Few personal credos have been so definitively put, though Alan would have denied there was anything personal in it. I tried more than once to find a fitting word for what *Lidice* and its performance represented. Alan rejected the idea of 'redemption', and looked a little scornful at mention of 'counter-magic' or 'exorcism'. For him, as for Stross, the remaking of Lidice was both a symbolic representation

moving a memorial to the lost men, women and children as the sculptures and museum exhibits. Lidice regularly attracts artists and the museum hosts a regular competition. It's perhaps best visited as part of a longer stay in Prague. There are regular (and cheap) flights to the city from London, Birmingham, Newcastle, East Midlands and Glasgow. A bus will get you there for £64 and leave you standing in front of the world's oldest operating astronomical clock, in the wall of the Old Town Hall. That's a good place to stand before taking a taxi (not unduly expensive) or bus to Lidice.

In astronomical time, what happened at Lidice is but a flicker. By contrast, the music of Martinů and Bush lives forever, and more important still, human life goes on at Lidice, responsive to nothing but the seasons. Go in spring or go in autumn. It's a place to visit when change is in the air. ■

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BACKING THE UNDERDOGS

On 27 January, David Titterton will take to the Wood, Wordsworth & Co organ in Leeds Town Hall to perform a repertoire of Harris, Samuel Wesley, Andriessen, Barrie Cabena and Ritter. He told *C&O*, 'The starting point for recital programmes is generally the style of the organ and the building; but in Leeds it is also the audience that has determined my choice of pieces. I remember from previous recitals at Leeds that they are a numerous, loyal and knowledgeable audience, who week on week enjoy a wide range of organ repertoire, often from the more familiar French and German traditions. On this occasion, I thought I would play some pieces which deserve to be better known and – given the dynamic range and colour of the Leeds organ – will sound very much at home. This year, I have particularly enjoyed playing August Ritter's magnificent third organ sonata, written in 1855 (dedicated to Franz Liszt), and this closes the recital, while Hendrik Andriessen's hauntingly beautiful *Sonata da Chiesa* (theme and variations) is the central work around which are contrasting pieces by Harris, Wesley and Barrie Cabena.' Titterton is the head of organ at the Royal Academy of Music, artistic director of St Albans International Organ Festival and a professor of the University of London.

► Elsewhere, Olivier Messiaen's *La Nativité du Seigneur* receives performances in three locations around the country. On 10 January, Sachin Gunga plays at Portsmouth Cathedral, while on 12 January David Dunnett performs at Norwich Cathedral. Later in the month, Jeremy Cole gives Wells Cathedral's annual performance of the piece in a Promenade Concert on 23 January at 7pm. The nine-movement work reflects on the recent festive season, exploring different images or concepts of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Alton, St Lawrence at 1pm

Paul Carr (7 Jan) 01420 543628

Birmingham Town Hall at 1pm

Thomas Trotter (13, 27 Jan)
0121 780 3333

Birmingham, St Chad's Cathedral at 1.15pm

Paul Carr (2 Jan) 0121 236 2251

Brighton, The Meeting House, Univ. of Sussex at 12 noon

D'Arcy Trinkwon (29 Jan)
01273 678217

Bristol, St Mary Redcliffe at 1.15pm

Jeremiah Stephenson (16 Jan), Simon Russell (23 Jan), Hamish Wagstaff (30 Jan) 0117 231 0060

Cambridge, Great St Mary's at 1pm

Anthony Gritten (31 Jan)
01223 747273

Edinburgh, Usher Hall at 1.10pm

John Kitchen (6, 13, 20, 27 Jan)
0131 228 1155

Glasgow University Memorial Chapel at 1.10pm

Kevin Bowyer (15, 29 Jan)
0141 330 5419

Godalming, SS Peter & Paul at 1pm

Jonathan Hope (3 Jan) 01483 414135

Grimsby Minster at 12.30pm

Charles Wooler (2 Jan) 01472 277277

Huddersfield Town Hall at 1pm

Gordon Stewart (6 Jan), Christopher Stokes (20 Jan) 01484 221900

Hull City Hall at 12.30pm

Darius Battiwalla (8 Jan)
01482 300306

Ipswich, St Mary at the Elms at 4.15pm

Martin Ellis (26 Jan) 07780 613754

Leeds Town Hall at 1.05pm

Gordon Stewart (13 Jan), Sarah Baldock (20 Jan), David Titterton (27 Jan) 0113 378 6600

London E1, The Troxy Theatre at 7pm

Simon Gledhill (4 Jan) 07759 974222

London EC2, St Lawrence Jewry next Guildhall at 1pm

Catherine Ennis (7, 14, 21, 28 Jan)
020 7600 9478

London EC2, St Margaret's at 1.10pm

Richard Townend (9 Jan) 020 7589 1206

London EC3, St Michael's Cornhill at 1pm

Benjamin Newlove (6 Jan), Jonathan Allsop (13 Jan), Jonathan Rennert (20 Jan), Christian Gautschi (27 Jan)
020 7283 3121

London EC4, St Dunstan-in-the-West at 1.15pm

Martin Ellis (10 Jan), Hamish Wagstaff (24 Jan), Christian Gautschi (31 Jan) 020 7405 1929

London EC4, St Paul's Cathedral at 4.45pm

Francesca Massey (5 Jan), Anna Lapwood (12 Jan) 020 7651 0898

London N1, Union Chapel at 6.30pm

Francesca Massey (8 Jan) 020 7226 1686

London SE8, St Paul's Deptford at 1pm

Emma Gibbins (25 Jan) 020 8692 7449

London SW1, Methodist Central Hall at 3pm

Gerard Brooks (19 Jan) 020 7654 2000

London SW1, Sacred Heart at 7.45pm

Peter Stevens (25 Jan) 020 8543 5861

London SW1, St Matthew's Westminster at 1.05pm

Martyn Noble (8 Jan) 020 7222 3704

London SW1, Westminster Abbey at 5.45pm

Peter Holder (5 Jan) 020 7654 4854

London SW1, Westminster Cathedral at 4.45pm

Benjamin Giddens (19 Jan)
020 7798 9057

London SW3, Chelsea Old Church at 7.30pm

Nathan Laube (19 Jan) 020 7730 4500

London W1, All Saints', Margaret Street at 3.30pm

John Kitchen (26 Jan) 020 7626 1788

London W1, Grosvenor Chapel at 1.10pm

Simon Williams (14 Jan), Jeremy Lloyd (28 Jan) 020 7499 1684

London W1, St George's at 1.10pm

Michal Szostak (7 Jan), Katherine Meloan (21 Jan) 020 7629 0874

London W4, St Michael & All Angels' at 12.30pm

Benjamin Giddens (3 Jan)
020 8994 1380

Norwich Cathedral at 11am*

George Inscoc (1 Jan), David Dunnett (6.30pm, 12 Jan) 01603 218300

Pontefract, St Giles' at 1pm

Christopher Newton (17 Jan)
01977 795130

Portsmouth Cathedral at 8pm

Sachin Gunga (10 Jan) 02092 823300

Reading Town Hall at 1pm

David Pether (20 Jan) 0118 9606060

Rochdale Town Hall at 12 noon

Alexander Binns (11 Jan)
01706 343163

St Albans Cathedral at 12.30pm*

Christopher Muhley (15 Jan), John Scott Whiteley (5.30pm, 18 Jan)
01727 890210

Stratford-upon-Avon, Guild Chapel at 5pm

Peter Summers (4 Jan) 01789 207111

Warwick, Collegiate Church of St Mary at 1.15pm

Lucy Morrell (24 Jan)
01926 403940 (ext. 3)

Wells Cathedral at 1.05pm*

David Davies (9 Jan), Jeremy Cole (7pm, 23 Jan) 01749 672773

Worcester Cathedral at 1pm

Adrian Gunning (25 Jan) 01905 732900

Worsley, Holy Trinity at 3pm

Paul Carr (5 Jan) 01384 273221

For fuller listings, visit
www.choirandorgan.com

* unless otherwise stated

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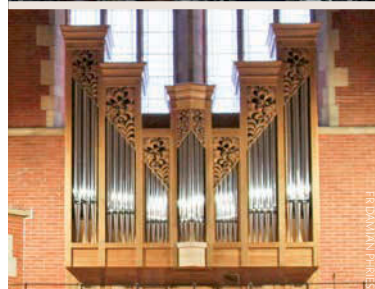
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CHOIR & ORGAN NEXT ISSUE

FEBRUARY 2020

ERIC WHITACRE SINGERS

From concert hall to experiential fashion installation – these GRAMMY winners are open to performing anywhere.

ŠKRABL IN YORKSHIRE

The inside story of a new Škrabl instrument in Barnsley's Holy Rood Church.

VIENNESE WHIRL

Visit the Capital of Music 2020, known worldwide for its New Year's Day concert and famous Boys' Choir.

PAPAGENA

With repertoire from Hildegard to Katy Perry, this a cappella consort will sing anything written solely for female voices.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Dutch organist Gerben Mourik delves into Hans Friedrich Micheelsen's Organ Concerto no.2, op.34, 'Es sungen drei Engel'.

Plus...

International news, specialist reviews, readers' offers, and a supplement of summer schools and short courses.

Hitting the heights

The **Editor** picks the top 20 albums reviewed in 2019

KEYBOARD CDS

The Complete Organ Works of Francisco Correa De Arauxo (1584-1654)

Robert Bates

Loft Recordings LRCD-1141-45



This box-set of five CDs presents the first recording of the complete

organ works of this renaissance Spanish composer, using historic Mexican instruments and new US organs. (March/April)

From Palaces to Pleasure Gardens

Thomas Trotter

Regent REGCD 526 [71:20]



On the restored 1735 Bridge organ in Christ Church, Spitalfields,

Thomas Trotter transports us back to the organ's heyday 300 years ago, when the public flocked to Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens to hear music by Handel, J.C. Bach, Corelli and their contemporaries. (September)

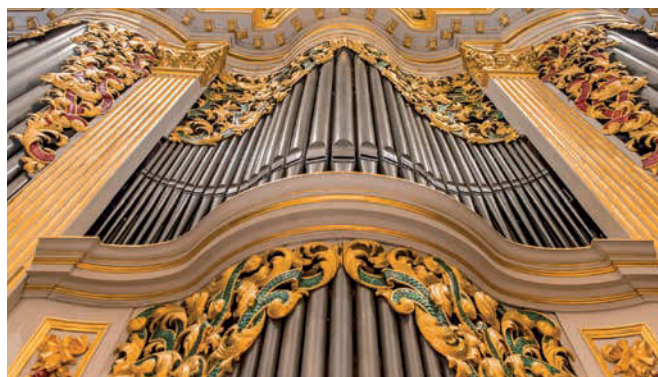
Firebird

Oxbridge Organ Duo (Benedict Lewis-Smith and Julian Collings)
Regent REGCD 500



This dynamic duo's debut recording sets Blackburn Cathedral's organ

alight with vibrant transcriptions of Stravinsky's *The Firebird* and Ravel's *Boléro* alongside a purpose-built duet by Stephen Paulus, *Paeon*. (March/April)

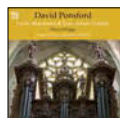


▲ Freiberg Dom's Silbermann organ: 'divine' colour brought out by Masaaki Suzuki

Louis Marchand and Jean-Adam Guilain: Pièces d'Orgue

David Ponsford

Nimbus Alliance NI 6390 (vol.7)



Some performances delight but fail to inform; here is a happy combination of dynamic playing set alongside

detailed, insightful liner notes. David Ponsford continues his Nimbus series of French Organ Music in the Golden Age on the restored Scherrer instrument in Saint-Antoine l'Abbaye. (October)

Johann Sebastian Bach: Das Wohltemperierte Klavier vol.1

Steven Devine

Resonus RES 10239 (2CDs)



Since September, C&O's reviews have been open to harpsichord CDs.

Steven Devine's performance on a Colin Booth instrument has been 'superbly' recorded. (October)

Soleils Couchants

Louis-Noël Bestion de Camboulas
Harmonia mundi HMN 916113



A 'winning debut' on Harmonia mundi's talent-focused Nova label

showcases Royaumont Abbey's 1864 Cavaillé-Coll salon organ in 'ravishing duets' with singers and instrumentalists, demonstrating the organ's sensitivity in an accompanying role. (May/June)

Spergher: Organ and Harpsichord Music

Chiara Minali

Brilliant Classics 95834/1-3



Here is plenty to discover of music by a composer not even mentioned in

New Grove. Chiara Minali's triple-CD, performed on a historic organ in Venice and a harpsichord after G.B. Giusti (1681), is an excellent introduction to keyboard music that should be more widely known. (October)

Messiaen: Méditations sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité

Tom Winpenny

Naxos 8.573979



No list could be complete without one of the 20th century's greatest

organ composers. The most recent in Tom Winpenny's Naxos series showcases the Klais organ in Reykjavik's Hallgrímskirkja whose 'forthright colours and atmospheric resonance' he draws into sharp focus with his well-judged pacing. (November)

Invocations - Organ Music by Huw Morgan

David Pipe

Meridian CDE 84653



David Pipe's latest album on the Anneessens organ in Bridlington

Priory is a fine introduction to the works of Welsh composer Huw Morgan (b.1975). Pipe draws out their 'poetry and drama' on one of the UK's finest parish church organs. (December)

Bach: Organ Works, vol. 3

Masaaki Suzuki

BIS-2421



Music by Bach, Freiberg Dom's Silbermann organ, largely unmodified

since it was built in 1714, and leading Bach specialist Masaaki Suzuki form a winning combination. Full of 'divine' detail and colour. (December)

CHORAL CDS

Parry: Songs of Farewell and other Choral Works

Choir of New College Oxford,
Timothy Wakerell (org) / Robert
Quinney (dir)

Novum NCR1394



In 2018, the centenary of Parry's death led to fresh recordings of his choral works, none surpassed by this 'beautifully assembled and executed' CD with the conductor's new edition of *Songs of Farewell*. (January/February)

Handel: Ode for St Cecilia's Day

Carolyn Sampson (s), Ian Bostridge (t), Polish Radio Choir, Dunedin Consort / John Butt (dir)
Linn Records CKD 578



With John Butt's trademark attention to historical

performance practice, this CD 'encapsulates perfectly the questing intellect of the Age of Enlightenment', with stellar soloists, vivacious playing, richly-toned singing, and clarity and warmth of recorded sound. (January/February)

Gabriel Jackson: The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ

Sols, Choir of Merton College, Oxford, Oxford Contemporary Sinfonia / Benjamin Nicholas (dir)
Delphian DCD 342226



Each new setting of the Passion leads to curiosity about what fresh

insights it might bring. This setting is a 'work of exquisite imagination'. Commissioned for Merton College's 750th anniversary, it is eloquently performed on this premiere recording. (March/April)

Manuel Cardoso: Requiem, Lamentations, Magnificat & Motets

Cupertinos / Luís Toscano (dir)
Hyperion CDA 68252



This CD shone through the many early music recordings for its emotional content and for the authenticity of sound from this Portuguese group, 'surely the finest Iberian vocal consort yet to emerge'. (January/February)

Brahms: Ein deutsches Requiem (chamber version)

Natasha Schnur (s), Matt Sullivan (bar), Yale Schola Cantorum / David Hill (dir)
Hyperion CDA 68242 [66:21]



From several recordings reviewed in 2019 of Brahms's personal response to death, this chamber version – with string soloists, three wind players and piano – stood out as a 'revelation' to its seasoned reviewer. David Hill draws out an intimacy sometimes lost in the full orchestral version. (January/February)

All the Host of Heaven: Ešenvalds, Duruflé and Dove

Sols, Baylor A Cappella Choir, Isabelle Demers (org) / Alan Raines (dir)
Acis APL 55284

▼ 'The finest Iberian vocal consort yet to emerge': Cupertinos



COURTESY/CUPERTINOS



The annual shift in membership of a university choir can present its

conductor with the challenge of recreating a new unified whole. Alan Raines has succeeded admirably with this US choir, who produce a rare 'beautiful, calm legato line'. (March/April)

Dobrinka Tabakova: Kynance Cove; et al

Truro Cathedral Choir, BBC Concert Orchestra, Natalie Clein (vc), Joseph Wicks (org) / Christopher Gray (dir)
Regent REGCD 530



Dobrinka Tabakova's paean to Cornwall evocatively

captures the changing faces of the county's landscape – and who better to convey that than home-grown singers? Truro Cathedral Choir is in 'inspired form'. (October)

Amor Vita Mors

Erik Westberg Ensemble / Erik Westberg (dir)

Studio Acusticum + book



Swedish conductor Erik Westberg has picked up the baton from choral guru Eric Ericson, steering his vocal ensemble through a programme of Scandinavian and German music. This CD stood out for its 'simply great singing

with that lovely, intimate air of being overheard rather than aggressively projected towards an audience'. (October)

Magnificat

Choir of St John's College, Cambridge, Glen Dempsey (org) / Andrew Nethsingha (dir)
Signum Records SIGCD 588



This album demonstrates how six different composers

respond to the same text, creating 'a fascinating hour's music'. The St John's forces, performing their daily bread-and-butter but in no way sounding casual about it, are 'on top form'. (December)

An English Coronation 1902-1953

Gabrieli Consort and Players, Gabrieli Roar, Simon Russell Beale (narr) / Paul McCreesh (dir)
Signum Classics SIGCD 569



The rite of the four 20th-century British coronations is

'magnificently recreated' on this double-CD by the incomparable Gabrieli and several hundred young singers from the choral training programme. The 400 years' worth of mainly British music is interspersed with the coronation texts: 'close your eyes and you are there'. (May/June)

Scattered leaves ... from our Sketchbook



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NEW DISCS COMING OUT IN... JANUARY 2020



▲ The King's Singers' new album launches their year-long exploration of cultural heritage

In 2001, UNESCO proclaimed polyphony from the former Soviet republic of Georgia a 'masterpiece of intangible heritage of humanity'. This reflected the threat to singing technique caused by rural exodus and the rise of pop songs, the genre having previously suffered under socialist cultural policies. UNESCO divides it into three categories: complex polyphony, polyphonic dialogue over a bass background, and contrasted polyphony with three partially improvised sung parts.

This third type, characteristic of western Georgia, is one of the many global musical heritages explored by The King's Singers on their latest release, **Finding Harmony** [Signum Classics SIGCD 607]. The album is part of the ensemble's 2020 focus on

celebrating harmony across the world, bringing together music from different communities, countries and genres to highlight its power in effecting social change. The two pieces influenced by Georgian polyphony bring together three musical parts, one of which is a drone, in a traditional love song and a work thought to have been written in the 12th century by a Georgian king.

Ēriks Ešenvalds refers to polyphony as part of the decision-making process, imagining 'the voices of the singers swaying gently in the wind' in the title track of **There will come soft rains** [Signum Classics SIGCD 603]. In combining the somewhat bleak poetry of Sara Teasdale with rich harmony, Ešenvalds hopes that this piece

will emphasise the 'endless existence of nature' through human strife and war.

In a co-commission for the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus and St Albans Choral Society, Richard Blackford has written a setting of the traditional *Stabat Mater*, intertwining a contemporary relevance in the form of poetry by Anna Akhmatova, whose husband was 'disappeared' and whose son was arrested by Stalin's KGB. In **Pietà** [Nimbus Records NI 6396], he wanted to 'grab the listener by the throat' and evoke a tangible sense of the mother's pain.

Specialising in renaissance polyphony, Hyperion has released **Hellinck: Missa Surrexit pastor; Lupi: Te Deum & motets** [CDA 68304]. Under the direction of Stephen Rice, the Brabant Ensemble delves into the 16th-century works of Lupus Hellinck and Johannes Lupi, two members of the so-called musical 'wolf pack'.

To round off a choral-heavy month, St John's Voices in Cambridge present their first commercial CD, **William Mathias: Choral Music** [Naxos 8.574162], which includes several world premiere recordings. Having launched in 2013 as a sister choir to that of St John's College, Cambridge, the group of students from the College sing under the direction of Graham Walker, bringing a fresh perspective on the choral works of the Welsh composer, who died in 1992. ■

CHORAL CDS

Anthology of Contemporary Choral Music by Russian Composers vol.2

Tula State Choir/Slonimsky
Melodiya MELCD 1002598

Beethoven: König Stephan

Chorus Cathedralis Aboensis, Turku
Philharmonic Orchestra/Segerstam
Naxos 8.574042

Ēriks Ešenvalds: There will come soft rains

Pacific Lutheran Choir of the West/
Nance
Signum Classics SIGCD 603

Finding Harmony

The King's Singers
Signum Classics SIGCD 607

Hellinck: Missa Surrexit pastor;

Lupi: Te Deum & motets
Brabant Ensemble/Rice
Hyperion CDA 68304

Hugh Benham: Sacred Choral Music

Convivium Singers, Malcolm Archer
(org)/Norman
Convivium Records CR 050

Johann Joseph Abert: Ekkehard (Opera in 5 Acts)

Stuttgarter Choristen, SWR
Rundfunkorchester Kaiserslautern/
Falk
Capriccio C 5392

Richard Blackford: Pietà

Jennifer Johnston, Stephen Gadd,
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra
and Chorus/Dickson, Carr
Nimbus Records NI 6396

Rossini: Zelmira

Silva Dalla Benetta, Górecki
Chamber Choir
Naxos 8.660468-70

Salve, Salve, Salve:

Josquin's Spanish Legacy
Contrapunctus/Rees
Signum Classics SIGCD 608

Thomas Tomkins: Choral Works

Choir of HM Chapel Royal/
Jackson
Resonus Classics RES 10253

William Mathias: Choral Music

St John's Voices/Walker
Naxos 8.574162





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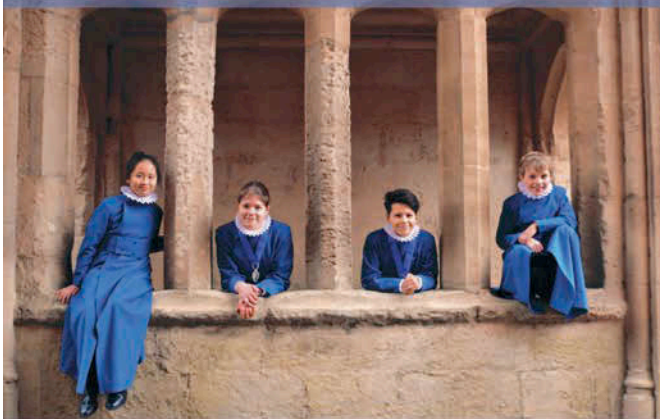
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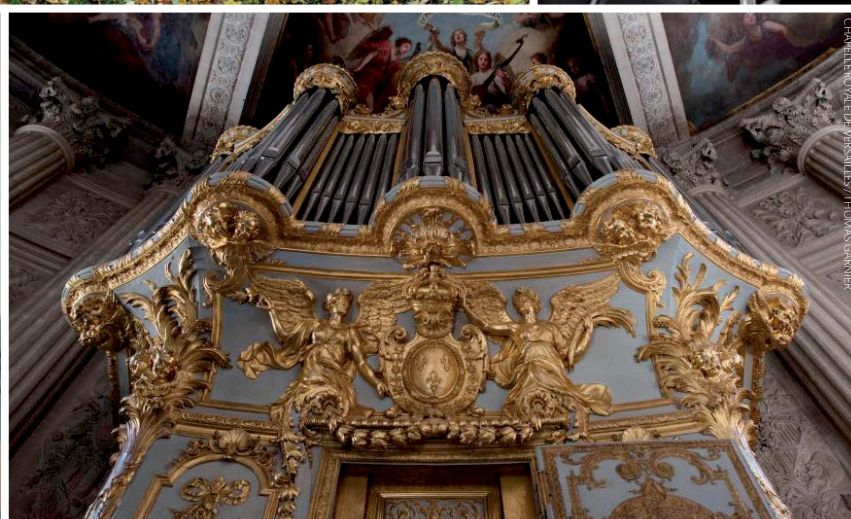
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REVIEWS

Rating: ★★★★★ Highly recommended ★★★★★ Very good ★★★ Good ★★ Average ★ Poor



THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS

Early Music Editor
Rebecca Tavener

Organ Music Editor
Stephen Farr

Choral Music Editors
Martin Ashley
Joy Hill
Jeremy Jackman
Jeremy Summerly

Chris Bragg
Rupert Gough
Brian Morton
David Ponsford
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Clare Stevens

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KEYBOARD CDS

D. Scarlatti: Sonatas vol.6

Pierre Hantaï (hpschd)

Mirare MIR 422 [78:00]

★★★★★



Volume 6 of Pierre Hantaï's exploration of Domenico

Scarlatti contains 17 sonatas: K.119, 179, 234, 501, 502, 69, 43, 384, 487, 170, 6, 550, 18, 544, 273, 161 and 477. Hantaï has an authoritative feeling for the many varied styles therein, and his interpretations are both commanding and totally convincing. Included in the essays is the revealing fact that Scarlatti visited Paris in 1724 and 1725, thus proving the link between the composer and Rameau (and hence J.S. Bach?). No details of the harpsichord are given, but it looks and sounds terrific. A lively, engaging, and thoroughly recommended CD. DAVID PONSFORD

Louis Couperin: Suites

Rinaldo Alessandrini (hpschd)

Naïve OP 30577 [79:25]

★★★★★



Rinaldo Alessandrini has concocted three suites, in A minor,

F major and D minor, to present some of Couperin's most memorable pieces, among them three unmeasured preludes that demonstrate both toccata and *tombeau* genres, including the three-movement *Prélude à l'imitation de Mr Froberger*. The suites contain the standard dances: allemandes, courantes, sarabands, minuets, gavottes and gigue, all played with conviction and a real characterisation. The recording is clean and resonant, and the harpsichord sounds appropriate for this mid-17th-

century music; but, alas, no details of the instrument are given, whereas unnecessary details of microphones and preamplifier are printed – strange priorities.

DAVID PONSFORD

Bach, Clérambault, Louis and François Couperin, Daquin

Ton Koopman, Clicquot/Tribuot organ (1710), Chapelle Royale, Versailles

Château de Versailles CVS 016 [57:49]

★★★★



This is the first CD in *L'âge d'or de l'orgue Française*, consisting of the

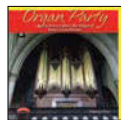
two Clérambault suites, three Daquin *Noëls*, selected pieces by Louis Couperin, François Couperin's *Élévation (Messe pour les Couvents)* and J.S. Bach's *Ich ruf zu dir*. The organ, by Robert Clicquot and Julien Tribuot, has had a chequered history, but is now reconstructed by Jean-Loup Boisseau and Bertrand Cattiaux. The sound of the organ in these acoustics is wonderful, but the Clérambault is eccentric, with (according to my original edition) some questionable registrations and ornaments, occasional wrong notes, and 'loose' *inégalité* that seems counter-intuitive. Hardly authoritative, but nevertheless imaginative.

DAVID PONSFORD

Organ Party vol.5

Kevin Bowyer, Wordsworth of Leeds organ, King's Lynn Minster Priory PRCD 1201 [71:35]

★★★★★



There's a joyful end-of-term quality to this fifth and final volume in Kevin Bowyer's hugely enjoyable *Organ Party* series. All

18 tracks here are first recordings, with contrasts aplenty to show off King's Lynn Minster's III/60 organ (equipped with 12 ranks of original Snetzler pipes) to best effect and to showcase Bowyer's copiously resourced, ripely expressed technique. Both combine to often thrilling ends in the gossamer delicacy of Charles Wels's *Celluloid Sketches*, Carl Robrecht's exuberantly playful *Kinderlieder-Potpourri* and Mons Leidvin Takle's passionate and proud *Young Spirit*. There's much else to enjoy, too, in a disc that gives great pleasure.

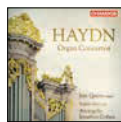
MICHAEL QUINN

Haydn: Organ Concertos

Iain Quinn (org), Sophie Gent (vn), Arcangelo / Jonathan Cohen (dir)

Chandos CHAN 20118 [69:41]

★★★★★



There is much debate regarding which concertos Haydn likely intended for organ and, I must admit, even after digesting the exceedingly comprehensive notes, I'm not sure I'm much the wiser. However, Iain Quinn with the fine players of Arcangelo present Concertos 1, 2 and 6, the last being for violin, organ and strings. The tenth Concerto is also recorded but, rather than making this a double album, it is only available for download. My only bugbear is that, with all the copious detail in the notes, the one crucial thing missing is the organ used. I can only assume the instrument is therefore the 1971 Grant, Degens & Bradbeer organ in the recording venue: St Mary's Church, Woodford. There is nothing to be ashamed of here – it is a very fine neo-classical instrument deftly played by Quinn. Arcangelo

contrasts with the very direct organ timbre, performing with real grace and elegant phrasing. RUPERT GOUGH

Bolero – The Orchestral Organ

Daniel Oyarzabal, Klais organ (2013), Léon Cathedral; Juanjo Guillem and Joan Castelló (perc) Odradek ORDCD 392 [57:57]

★★★★★



Acknowledging a long-held passion for symphonic repertoire that

heavily features percussion, Daniel Oyarzabal here presents arrangements (mostly his own) of a variety of such orchestral works with organ and percussion. The irony is that the five-manual Klais instrument built in 2013 is not a symphonic instrument but very much in the Spanish tradition. Sometimes this provides an effective, almost fairground, array of colours, particularly for the finale of *Le carnaval des animaux*, the extracts from *Capriccio espagnol* or the main feature: Ravel's *Boléro*. Two Bach pieces seem out of context in the playlist of what is otherwise quite an effective and engaging programme.

RUPERT GOUGH

Organ Duo at Riga Cathedral

Ilze Reine and Aigars Reinis, Walcker organ, Riga Cathedral LMIC/SKANI 047 [66:20]

★★★★★



More familiar organ duets by John Rutter and Gustav Merkel are brought together with recent works by Latvian composers. The historic Walcker organ is one of finest of its type in the world, and absolutely ideal for Merkel's *Sonata for 4 hands*. The

microphone placement (undoubtedly trying to avoid action noise) gives good depth of sound, but at the expense of some clarity. A major work here is a *Fugue and Fantasy* written by Ilone Brège for this duo and the Riga organ, which uses the instrument to great symphonic effect. Smetana's tone poem *The Moldau* is also very effectively adapted from the composer's four-hand version for piano.

RUPERT GOUGH

All the Stops – The David Drury Collection

David Drury, Sydney Town Hall and St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne

ABC Classics 481 8202 (3CDs) [228:44]

★★★★



This box set is a re-release of recordings from the earlier 1990s.

Sadly, not a huge effort has gone into the packaging here, with simple replication of notes from each of the three old recordings, and no further information on the all-important instruments involved. However, let that not detract from some first-rate performances by Australia's pre-eminent organist on the country's finest organs. For the first two CDs the 127-stop organ installed by William Hill & Son in 1890 ably accommodates all the romantic repertoire with the vibrant reeds, making for exciting renditions of French and English music in equal measure. The instrument is not recorded too close, giving a sense of being in the room and enveloped by the sounds of this vast instrument, although at the expense of clarity in the tutti sections. Particular highlights are the *Fantasia and Toccata* of Stanford and Dupré's *Cortège et litanie* (complete with

64ft reed at the end!) as well as a powerful *Gothic Toccata* by Australian composer Graeme Koehne. The third CD turns to the smaller, but no less significant, Lewis instrument in St Paul's, Melbourne. Again, I would prefer a little more clarity in the recording but there are really fine renditions of significant works, including Francis Jackson's *Toccata, Chorale & Fugue*, Jongen's *Quatre pièces* and Reger's *Fantasy on 'Wachet auf'*. Improvisations on all three discs make clever and exciting use of some complex themes.

RUPERT GOUGH

Bach, Liszt, Widor

Jae-Hyuck Cho, Cavaillé-Coll organ, La Madeleine, Paris
Evidence EVCD 058 [72:27]

★★★



Equally active as both pianist and organist, the Korean Jae-Hyuck

Cho studied at the Juillard School and served as an organist in the New York/New Jersey area for nearly 25 years. This first solo organ CD includes an expressionist rendering of BWV 565 as well as Liszt's 'Ad Nos' and 'BACH'. By far the most interesting track on the disc is the first recording of the impressionist *Pahdo* by Korean composer Texu Kim. Cho plays with great technique on the noisy, enlarged and electrified Cavaillé-Coll at La Madeleine, whose sound is atmospherically captured and whose recent chamade is heard mercifully rarely. The booklet is very odd, with no information about the organ or the music (save for the composer's programme note about *Pahdo*) and only a semi-autobiographical note by the player.

CHRIS BRAGG

European Organ Music

Colin Walsh, 'Father' Willis organ, Lincoln Cathedral
Priory PRCD 1223 [76:06]

★★★★★



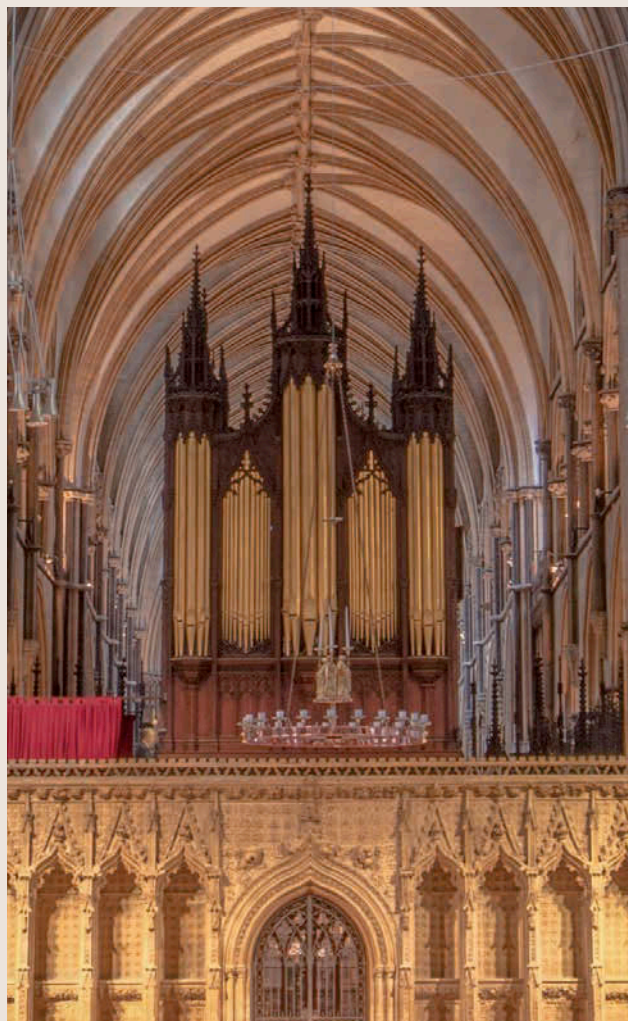
Here's a substantial recital, in every respect, from Colin Walsh. His 30-year association with Lincoln Cathedral's IV/67 'Father' Willis pays dividends aplenty, serving as an eloquent reminder of why it has long been called 'the fairest in the land'. Walsh's choice of every element at his disposal is immaculate, tonal contrasts and details delineated with painterly precision, technical challenges

'Painterly precision'

adroitly executed. Standout pieces include Jongen's sublime *Cantabile* (op.37 no.1), Bossi's majestic processional *Entrée pontificale* and Franck's poetic op.18 *Prélude, fugue et variation*, realised here with enormous subtlety. Pieces by Duruflé, Langlais and Henri Mulet complete a rewarding, immensely satisfying disc.

MICHAEL QUINN

▼ 'The fairest in the land': Lincoln Cathedral's 'Father' Willis organ



MICHAEL DECKWITH

The Mendelssohn Sonatas: A Cycle of Eighteen Poetic Movements

Hans Davidsson, Schiörlin organ (1806), Gammalkil, Sweden
Loft LRCD 1166 [79:26]



Recordings of the Mendelssohn sonatas pass over my desk regularly, so it's good to be able to report on a beautifully recorded and presented disc which, in several aspects, is unusual and eye-opening. Hans Davidsson has gone to great lengths to shine new light both on the programmatic aspects of these pieces (and their inter-relationships) and on various performance practice aspects that arguably deserve re-evaluation. His extensive booklet essay deals almost exclusively with the former, citing various contemporary receptions and perceptions of the works' poetic nature (including reviews by August Ritter and others) as well as investigating the spiritual implications of the choice of chorales. The performance practice elements, however, remain undiscussed and in at least three key aspects are noteworthy enough to require consultation of Davidsson's extended essay on the subject, published in the University of Rochester Press tome *Mendelssohn, the Organ, and the Music of the Past: Constructing Historical Legacies* (2015). Only when heard in conjunction with this essay does this recording begin to make sense.

The first noteworthy aspect is that of organ choice. The Gammalkil organ (11/28) is one of the best-preserved historic instruments in Sweden, built by Pehr Schiörlin in 1806 and surely one of the most individualistic organs of its time. Davidsson argues convincingly that the 18th-century central German organ, with its variety of 8ft stops (and varied speech characteristics) and tierce mixtures was Mendelssohn's primary organ point of reference, and from this angle the choice of the Gammalkil organ is justifiable. The splendidly colourful and

The Gammalkil organ is one of the most individualistic of its time

engaging sound in the dry-ish room provides a compelling partner for Mendelssohn's music, although the lively wind (four wedge bellows) suffers some discomfort, for example when the pedal is especially active. This aspect, uniquely, perhaps works against Davidsson's choice in as much as Mendelssohn complimented the absence of 'shake' in the sound of the organ at the Stadtkirche in Weimar in a letter of 1830.

The second aspect is that of registration, and especially the changing of registrations and manuals during movements at places not marked in the published score. This is especially noteworthy in the final movement of the Fifth Sonata, for example. Although hardly conclusive, Davidsson convincingly cites first-hand accounts (by Mounsey, Emil Naumann and others) of Mendelssohn's manipulation of registration, realisation of crescendos and diminuendos, and employment of registrants. In the case of the Fifth Sonata, he even cites Mendelssohn's annotations in his own manuscript as justification for the many manual changes employed.



▲ Hans Davidsson: a 'fascinating and highly informed approach'

The most alarming aspect of Davidsson's playing, however, and the one that will separate the crowd more than any other, is his application of agogics. There are times when the very gestural approach to the music and the inherent flexibility of pulse seems to open new doors, for example in the First Sonata recitative (even more so in the context of the 'darkness to light' narrative attached to the sonata by August Ritter). Here and elsewhere many listeners will balk but, again, reference to Davidsson's larger article is essential. In it he cites first-hand descriptions by Clara Schumann of Mendelssohn's playing, the art of tempo modification as described by Czerny, Berlioz's description of a conversation with Mendelssohn on the futility of the metronome, as well as aspects of tempo, harmonic pulse and character designation. He concludes, 'In fact, a combination of a rather fast reference pulse and flexible metre renders a compelling balance between energy and expressivity, and evokes an attractive and poetic effect.' Listeners will come to their own conclusions, but it is perhaps a shame that the rationale behind the most obviously unusual aspects of the playing style heard on this disc is not elucidated in the booklet, and that those listeners will have to go to similar lengths to find the answers. As such, Davidsson's fascinating and highly informed approach on this recording leaves itself open to far more glib dismissal than warrants his very considerable stature as a highly influential musicologist/organist.

CHRIS BRAGG

◀ **Flor Peeters: Organ Music**

Roberto Marini, Klais organ (1930), Kristus-Koningkerk, Antwerp

Brilliant Classics 95637 (2CDs) [79:34; 78:50]

★★★★



Flor Peeters is the sort of composer whose music, more than 30

years after his death, is now chronologically distant enough to surely be due a revival.

I must confess to only being familiar with the pieces which found any popularity in the UK (*Suite modale, Toccata, Fugue et Hymne sur Ave Maris Stella*, the *Aria* and – initially thanks to those tantalising fragments on the famous LP by Caleb Jarvis – the *Lied-Symphony*), so this jam-packed pair of CDs from the talented Roberto Marini is very welcome indeed. It illustrates a broad spectrum of development from the bombast of the early *Symphonic Fantasy on an Eastern Gregorian Alleluia* to the compact, modal *Three Preludes & Fugues* of 25 years later and the terse, Hindemith-like *Sinfonia per Organo*. The *Variations on an Old Flemish Song* are dedicated to Dupré, the final fugue and toccata so obviously referencing Dupré's own *Variations sur un Noël*.

Often virtuosic, these scores are handled with aplomb by Marini on an organ which, until fairly recently, might itself have been dismissed entirely. The 1930 Klais in Antwerp was opened by Peeters and is clearly a child of the divergences in philosophy following the momentous German conferences of the mid-1920s, with Jahnn and Mahrenholz's desire to rediscover earlier tonal constructions dressed in a

pseudo-symphonic costume and allied to the technological advances of the industrial era. The tuning is sometimes a bit sour, but it fits the music like a glove.

CHRIS BRAGG

CHORAL CDS**Einsamkeit, O stilles Wesen: German Cantatas of the Baroque**

Sybilla Rubens (s), David Erler (a), Hans-Jörg Mammel (t), Thomas Gropper (b), L'arpa festante / Christoph Hesse (dir)

Christophorus CHR 77437 [77:13]

★★★★



This CD presents a well-conceived programme of five sacred German

cantatas by composers Jacobi, Heinichen, Kuhnau, Thaur and J.S. Bach. None is particularly familiar and even the final example by Bach, probably the only one that might be known, is a reconstruction of the Weimar version of *Alles was von Gott geboren* (BWV80a). But what undiscovered riches Christoph Hesse and L'arpa festante reveal to us on this CD. Listening to it straight through makes one realise again how central the cantata was to the Lutheran liturgy, and how creatively composers responded to what might have seemed something of a chore: none of these examples sounds routine, none is without interest. L'arpa festante employs small forces throughout – single strings and never more than two to a vocal line in the choruses. All is delivered with a tremendous sense of style, even panache when needed, and their scholarship is worn lightly.

PHILIP REED

Sibelius: Kullervo

Johanna Rusanen (s), Ville Rusanen (bar), Estonian National Male Choir, The Polytech Choir / Hannu Lintu (dir)

Ondine ODE 1338.5 [72:28]

★★★★★



Sibelius was deeply ambivalent about his 'choral symphony',

blocking publication until after his death. It wasn't recorded until about 1970, I think, on the first of Paavo Berglund's versions. This new CD tops even the later versions by Neeme Järvi and by Osmo Vänskä. The introduction, which sets up the trajectories of Kullervo's brutally tragic life, is tightly controlled and almost discursive, like a bard's prologue. Nor do the two principals overegg their X-rated relationship. If there is redemption waiting in the wings, it comes through Kullervo's self-sacrifice, and Sibelius may have learned from Bruckner how to first delay and then deliver the moment of transcendence. Lintu and his choirs catch both perfectly. For all the ambiguity and unfortunate circumstance in which it first appeared in 1892, *Kullervo* is an epoch in Finnish music, and that is reflected in this powerfully feeling interpretation.

BRIAN MORTON

Tchaikovsky: Liturgy of St John Chrysostom; Nine Sacred Choruses

Kārlis Rūtentāls (t – Celebrant priest), Gundars Dzīlums (b – Deacon), Latvian Radio Choir / Sigvards Klāva (dir)

Ondine ODE 1336.2 [77:07]

★★★★★



Jānis Togāns, who wrote this CD's liner notes, rightly points out how

compartmentalised is

Tchaikovsky's reputation. Lovers of the symphonies are often ignorant of the sacred music. Those who regard the *Liturgy of St John Chrysostom* as his masterpiece (and the composer sometimes seemed to agree) rarely have much time for the operas. Strange, when the musical virtues – intuitive grasp of structure, internal drama, intense melodism – are common to all. Sigvards Klāva and his choir approach the *Liturgy* exactly as if it were a staged symphony. In the near-perfect acoustics of the Riga concert hall, and even on CD, the performance is intense and richly immersive, even without recourse to spatial effects. The *Nine Sacred Choruses* are probably best experienced separately, but are wonderful, too.

BRIAN MORTON

Officium: Remember me, my dear

Hilliard Ensemble, Jan Garbarek (sop. sax)

ECM New Series 2625 / 4817971

[77:53]

★★★★



This was recorded on the final leg of the farewell tour of the Officium

project, one of the surprise successes of recent years. The recorded concert was programmed in Bellinzona, Switzerland, as part of a series called 'Tra jazz e nuove musiche', and that's both the point and the problem. Jan Garbarek's music parted company with jazz a long time ago and the only 'new music' here is a couple of compositions by the saxophonist; the rest is arrangements of sacred and secular works from past ages and today, some anonymous, others by Pérotin, Hildegard, ▶



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◀ Guillaume le Rouge and Arvo Pärt, but performed in a kind of stylistic mash-up that makes little of context, authenticity or performance logic. It all sounds gorgeous, needless to say, though why Garbarek doesn't deploy his tenor instrument now and again seems odd, given the demands of listening to the soprano horn at this length and in such acoustics.
BRIAN MORTON

New England Choirworks

Yale Schola Cantorum, Elm City Girls' Choir (Rebecca Rosenbaum, chorus master), Juilliard415, Rabindra Goswami (sitar), Ramchandra Pandit (tabla) / David Hill (dir)

Hyperion CDA 683 14 [75:16]

★★★★★



David Hill's connection with Yale, where he serves as principal

conductor of Yale Schola Cantorum and is closely involved in the training of choral conducting students, bears fruit in this fine CD, which brings together pieces by Tawnie Olson (*Magnificat*), Roderick Williams (*A New England Symphony*), Hill himself (*God be in my head*), Daniel Kellogg (*Shout joy!*) and Reena Esmail (*This love between us: Prayers for unity*) in which Indian and western classical styles are combined. While Hill's piece – composed for John Scott's memorial service – is the shortest on the disc, its brevity in no sense undermines the intensity of its emotional content, which is beautifully caught by the Yale singers. Williams – the composer and the celebrated baritone are one and the same – was commissioned to write his *New England Symphony* for Yale Schola Cantorum. It's a substantial unaccompanied work, which brings out the very

best in the choir as they rise to its not inconsiderable challenges. The whole CD offers unexpected programming delivered with the very highest standards of music-making and is well worth investigating.

PHILIP REED

Like to the Lark (Alfvén, Bingham, Gjeilo, Mahler, Stanford, Stenhammar, Vaughan Williams, Wikander)

Maria Forsström (m-s), Jennifer Pike (vn), Swedish Chamber Choir / Simon Phipps (dir)
Chandos SACD CHSA 5255

[63:54]

★★★



These (very) mixed programmes are difficult to review.

There's a gently pastoral theme running through the set. It's not quite clear why we need another version of RVW's *The Lark Ascending*, except that it establishes an approximate timeline for the sequence; but it sounds lovely, and there are some other bold pairings, like Judith Bingham's *The Drowned Lovers* (with Maria Forsström as soloist) on top of Stanford's *The Blue Bird* and – a nice touch – David Wikander's *Kung Liljekonbalje* (*King Lily of the Valley*), which gives the folksy tone some ethnomusicological muscle. Simon Phipps has the choir fine-tuned, and the SACD sound is impossible to fault.

BRIAN MORTON

Liszt: Via Crucis; Pärt: Sacred Choral Works

Marianne Pärna (a), Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, Kalle Randalu (pno) / Kaspars Putninš (dir)

Ondine ODE 1337-2 [64:57]

★★★★★



Is Liszt's *Via Crucis* having something of renaissance, on CD at least? This is

the second recording to come under review in as many months and this account from Kaspars Putninš and his Estonian forces is as searching as any I've heard. Liszt's sacred music is still too little known, yet the composer set great store by it. The piano writing in the *Via Crucis* is central to the work (perhaps more so than the chorus) and akin to Liszt's late piano pieces, full of strange turns of harmony and unsettling juxtapositions, all of which Kalle Randalu grasps without ever needing to be showy or dominating. It is a reading which reaches to the heart of this most mysterious and meditative of works. The choral sound is exquisite: poised and beautifully blended throughout. As you might expect from this choir, they are completely at home in four of Arvo Pärt's sacred works.

PHILIP REED

Zachary Wadsworth: An Armistice Oratorio

Lawrence Wiliford (t), Arwen Myers (s), Borealis String Quartet, Martin Fisk, Robin Reid (perc), Rick Bennett, Ian Farthing, Greg Mohr, Stash Bylicki, Paul Birch (readers), Chor Leoni Men's Choir / Erick Lichte (dir)
Chor Leoni CLR 1909 [58:29]

★★★★



Zachary Wadsworth takes a fresh and original approach to 'war poetry', to which we all too often respond with slavish respect. In the 'War' section of this very original work, he has Humbert Wolfe and Isaac Rosenberg in fragmentary dialogue, and while he relies elsewhere on more

obvious sources, like Charles Hamilton Sorley, Robert Service and Siegfried Sassoon, as well as soldiers' testimony, he handles them in a highly intelligent way, refusing to condense these individual experiences into either moral obloquy or flag-waving. This is, if you like, a soldier's oratorio, not a general's, and not one-dimensionally pacifist. As such, it suits the live recording, the rattle of percussion and small string group. It feels fresh, intimate, alternately terrible and exhilarating.

BRIAN MORTON

Hodie!: Choral Works of Benjamin Britten and Daniel Pinkham

Dale Warland Singers, John Ferguson (org), Kathy Keinzle (hp), Jay Johnson (handbells) / Dale Warland (dir)

Gothic G-49317 [57:19]

★★★★



Founded in 1972, the 40-strong professional voices of the Dale

Warland Singers performed a wide variety of choral music, particularly of the 20th century, until they were disbanded in 2004. This release in the 'Dale Warland Live Series' brings together Christmas music by Britten, his *A Ceremony of Carols*, with American Daniel Pinkham's *Christmas Cantata* (*Sinfonia Sacra*), *Company at the Creche* (a suite of short character pieces for two-part treble choir with harp, organ and handbells), and four independent Christmas-themed pieces. The recordings are generally clean and well balanced, and on the evidence of this CD the DWS were an excellent chamber choir. Warland directs well-judged, fresh readings of the Pinkham material. *A Ceremony of Carols* is ▶

EARLY MUSIC



Rebecca Tavener rounds up the latest releases

This column hasn't featured plainchant recently, so here's a proper fix in the form of three outstanding examples of wonderfully well-sung, well-researched, unusual repertoire in recordings which should excite chant aficionados. St Hildegard of Bingen continues to delight and inspire, so let's welcome **Ad caelestem Jerusalem perducando** [in Canto INC 04] from the aptly named, recently formed Polish group Flores Rosarum, directed by Susi Ferfaglia. In a thoughtful sequence of 14 chants and six ravishing instrumental improvisations, these female voices convince and compel with fine, flowing ensembles and solos. The occasional use of upper drones is particularly striking, casting a nimbus around the saint's visionary texts. Imaginative, but never to excess, with engaging devotional intensity, they evoke Hildegard's spirituality in this tender, knowledgeable, tasteful, loving tribute, aided by warmly resonant acoustics.

St Bernard of Clairvaux was Hildegard's great champion in life, and this founding father of western mysticism is celebrated in **Chants of the Cistercians** [Christophorus CHE 0217-2] in a fascinating

▼ Hildegard of Bingen 'continues to delight and inspire'



RUPTERBERG CODD, LIBER SCIVIAS

programme including six examples of 'Jubilus rhythmicus' by the saint himself. The male and female voices of Ensemble Officium, together and as soloists, sing with authority, serenity, technical security, most elegant phrasing and exemplary 'line'. Next we have two more saints in the form of a medieval power couple: **Heinrich and Kunigunde – Gregorian Chant for an Imperial Couple** [Christophorus CHE 0215-2], a double album from Schola Bamberg with roundly released male voices of individual character creating glorious blend and ensemble in flowing *legato* and impressive unanimity. CD1 marks the coronation of Kaiser Heinrich II in 1002 and CD2 features the Office of St Cunigunde (1288), honouring his miraculous consort. Without funky scorings or extra bells and whistles (apart from the 12th-century Cunigunde bell from Bamberg Cathedral, rung at the beginning and end of CD2), here is atmospheric, unadorned chant, well-phrased, well-understood, and clearly well-loved.

Fresh thinking in performance practice intrigues and entertains

Discernment, scholarship and nuance in chant performance are insufficient without the full engagement of the voice. Three 'classic' Gregorian chant albums from the Monastic Choir of St Peter's Abbey, Solesmes, just re-released, must, reluctantly, be set aside because the Solesmes Schola does not sing – it croons. A discussion about why their justly celebrated plainchant revival has shied away from a wholehearted engagement with the healthy physicality of singing is long overdue.

In other news, **O Rosa Bella** [Brilliant Classics 95529] is a cunningly constructed programme of late medieval music following the popularity of the title Marian chanson around Europe, with polyphony by Dunstable, Bedynghe, Hert, and Ockeghem but, chiefly, celebrating the Frenchman Gilles Joye: his *Missa O Rosa bella*, sung by high male voices with a wide variety of lovely instrumental colours in support. Italian groups Ensemble Dionea and Ensemble Nova Alta create a wonderfully 'other' soundscape – spiny, nasal, direct, gripping – recorded with presence in the glowing acoustics of Madonna delle Grazie Sanctuary, Bevagna. Besides happy discoveries from Joye, fresh thinking in performance practice intrigues and entertains in spite of vocal intonation issues.

To conclude, here's another Holy Roman Emperor: **Geistliche Musik für Kaiser Maximilian I** [Christophorus CHR 77439] in two CDs compiling reissued recordings of works principally by Heinrich Isaac, with material from Josquin, Hofhaimer, and Senfl. CD1 consists of motets and CD2 features Isaac's *Missa pro Maximiliano* sung and played by Ensemble Hofkapelle, directed by Michael Procter, including arresting alternim organ improvisations. The singing may not come from the top drawer, but taken as a whole it's a worthwhile tribute to the music-loving emperor and his composers.

Rebecca Tavener is a singer and director specialising in early and contemporary music. She is founder-director of Canty, Scotland's only professional medieval music group.

◀ given in its SATB arrangement made by Julius Harrison (somewhat against Britten's wishes). As an arrangement, it works reasonably well, though the spirited canonic writing in 'This little Babe' doesn't come off with quite the *joie de vivre* that it does in the original three-part treble version. But in what is a live radio broadcast, the DWS capture much of the spirit of the piece.

PHILIP REED

Cor Europae – Christmas in Mediaeval Prague

Tiburtina Ensemble /
Barbora Kabátková (dir)
Ricercar RIC4 10 [60:14]

★★★★★



This fine female quartet unveils the enchanting liturgical

repertoire of Bohemia in the 14th century as preserved in the archives of Prague Cathedral and the Benedictine convent of Prague Castle. In solo or ensemble, the sinuously graceful singing of unique chant and organum (still fashionable in Bohemia after the *ars antiqua* had become *vieux chapeau* in western Europe) glows with the expectation, faith, and joy of Advent and Christmas. Full-toned, focused voices compel the listener's attention, with the acoustics of Zbraslav Castle's Church of St James adding sonic sympathy.

REBECCA TAVENER

Music for Milan Cathedral

Siglo de Oro / Patrick Allies (dir)
Delphian DCD 34224 [66:28]

★★★★★



Six elegant, masterly, creatively scored motets by

Hermann Werrecore appear in

their world premiere recordings as the rarest delicacies in a flavoursome menu of works from the maestri of 16th-century Milan. Influenced by Josquin, Werrecore is a significant rediscovery who richly deserves the attention of these youthful voices and our ears. Siglo de Oro display emotion, dynamic sensitivity, sustained lines, and a balance revealing the interplay of internal voices, delighting in works by Josquin, Gaffurius, Weerbeke and Phinot.

Plumbing deep wells of spiritual devotion, this music meets its match in poised, committed performances of simultaneous unanimity and character.

REBECCA TAVENER

Bach: Magnificat

Hana Blažíková (s), Marie Perbost (s), Éva Začik (a), Thomas Hobbs (t), Stephan MacLeod (b-bar), La Chapelle Harmonique / Valentin Tournet (dir)

Chateau de Versailles CVS 009
[59:13]

★★★★★



This is Bach with a French rather than a German accent,

but the young conductor Valentin Tournet has absorbed all the available research into performance practice and delivers wonderfully vivacious performances with the ensemble he founded in 2017. The soloists sing the choruses and the players dance their way through every movement. Historical interest is provided by the presentation of the Magnificat in its original E flat major version (BWV 234a) and it is preceded by an appropriate Christmas cantata, *Christen, ätztet diesen Tag* BWV 63. I loved it.

CLARE STEVENS

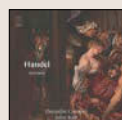


▲ Outstanding orchestral playing from the Dunedin Consort

Handel: Samson

Joshua Ellicott (Samson), Jess Dandy (Micah), Matthew Brook (Manoa), Vitali Rozyenko (Harapha), Sophie Bevan (Dalila), Hugo Hymas (Israelite, Philistine, Messenger), Mary Bevan (Virgin, Israelite Woman, Philistine Woman), Fflur Wyn (Virgin, Philistine Woman), Dunedin Consort, Tiffin Boys' Choir / John Butt & James Day (dirs)
Linn CKD 599 (3CDs) [75:29; 76:01; 52:44]

★★★★★



John Butt and the Dunedin Consort already have considerable form in Handel, with fine recordings of several works under their collective belts, notably *Messiah*. This remarkable recording of *Samson* (1743), with a libretto by Milton, is at least the equal of the Dunedin's previous Handel recordings and very possibly outclasses them. Handel wrote for the greatest singers of his day – for example, John Beard was the first Samson – and Butt has assembled a cast of which Handel would surely have approved. Joshua Ellicott is, by turns, powerful and vulnerable in the title role; Matthew Brook as Samson's father, Manoa, is touching, especially in his aria 'How willing my paternal love'; Vitali Rozyenko is warlike as Harapha, the Philistine warrior; and Sophie Bevan is suitably alluring as the treacherous Dalila. Hugo Hymas and Jess Dandy make easy work of their items, while Mary Bevan is beautifully caught in her material, notably delivering a handsome account of the celebrated 'Let the bright seraphim', with Paul Sharp a fearless trumpeter. Butt stiffens the choral consort with boys' voices on the top line. (A version without the boys is available online.) Together with outstanding orchestral playing (the pair of horns are a total joy), this complete recording of Handel's first version of *Samson* is highly recommended.

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◀ **Giulio Mercati:**
Interrogatorio a Maria –
Opere Sacre

Lidia Basterretxea Vila (s),
Gruppo Vocale S. Bernardo,
Claudi Hauri (vc), Mattia Marelli
(org) / Giulio Mercati (dir/org)
Tactus TC 971301 [58:17]

★★★



As he and two
colleagues explain
at length in the
liner booklet, this

musical portrait of Giulio
Mercati, organist of the parish
church of Santa Maria degli
Angioli in Lugano, Switzerland,
is essentially an exploration of
how expressiveness and
originality in liturgical music can
be achieved by fusing classical
tradition and modern
inventiveness. It presents a series
of pieces written over a number
of years, for 'spiritual concerts
and meditation meetings', setting
or reflecting a selection of mainly
Marian texts. I found the concept
interesting and the music very

appealing but would like to hear
the choral works performed by
more accomplished singers.

CLARE STEVENS

Amadio Freddi: Vespers
1616

Gonzaga Band / Jamie Savan (dir)
Resonus RES 10245 [58:10]

★★★★★



Another Vespers –
should we get
excited? Yes, in
moderation, for

Freddi, Monteverdi's
contemporary in Treviso, was no
slavish imitator, and this
premiere recording of his works
in a lovingly, carefully
constructed Vespers sequence
with impeccable scholarship
(including material by Donati,
Marini, Giovanni Gabrieli,
Grandi and Castello) will
enchant and intrigue. Fresh,
spritely, amiable singing,
carefully balanced with cornett,
violin and organ, all gilded with
fluent, effortless *abbellimenti*, free

from ostentation, conjures fine
chamber-sized performances,
captured in clear, cool acoustics.

REBECCA TAVENER

Karl Jenkins: Miserere
– Songs of Mercy and
Redemption

Iestyn Davies (c-t), Belinda Sykes
(vocals), Polyphony, Britten
Sinfonia, Maya Youssef (qanun),
Catrin Finch (hp), Zands Duggan,
Jody Jenkins (perc), Abel Selaocoe
(vc) / Stephen Layton (dir)
Decca Records 4188580 [51:00]

★★★★★



If anyone can sell
Karl Jenkins's new
treatment of Psalm
51 combined with

a selection of Latin, Aramaic,
Arabic, Persian and Hebrew
texts, it is this all-star cast of
British and Middle Eastern
musicians (Iestyn Davies is in
particularly fine voice). *Miserere*
is a cantata in 13 movements,
dedicated to all who have
suffered or perished in the

conflicts in the Middle East over
the past 70 years; it was
premiered at the Grayshott
Concerts in Hampshire
(England) in November 2019.
The musical gestures are familiar
from a wide range of sources, but
Jenkins has stitched them
together to create a haunting
work that is given a polished,
committed performance on this
disc and will no doubt prove
immensely popular with his
myriad fans.

CLARE STEVENS

The Choral Collection

Various composers and artists
Naxos 8.503298 (30CDs) [31+ hrs]

★★★★★



I was about to
describe this as a
representative
rather than

comprehensive selection of
choral works from across the
centuries, but actually 'random'
is probably a more accurate
description. The discs feature

▶

Haydn: Missa Cellensis in honorem Beatissimae
Virginis Mariae

Johanna Winkel (s), Sophie Harmsen (a), Benjamin Bruns (t), Wolf
Matthias Friedrich (b), RIAS Kammerchor, Akademie für Alte Musik
Berlin / Justin Doyle (dir)

Harmonia mundi HMM 902300 [65:43]

★★★★★



The origins of this most elaborate of Haydn's Mass
settings are enigmatic – the autograph score is
incomplete, but the number of surviving copies
indicates enormous popularity at the start of the

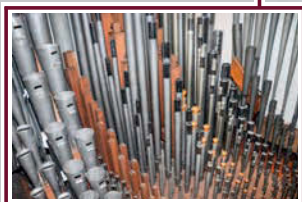
19th century. Bernhard Schrammek speculates in the liner
notes that it may have been written as a personal thanks to the
Blessed Virgin for Haydn's professional achievements – he seems
to have begun it shortly after his promotion to Kapellmeister at
the court of Nikolaus Esterházy. The title indicates that it was
intended for performance at the pilgrimage shrine of Mariazell.
In this effervescent recording, RIAS Kammerchor and the
Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin under Justin Doyle's
secure direction make light work of its virtuosic musical
challenges.

CLARE STEVENS

▼ RIAS Kammerchor rise to virtuosic challenges



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THE Leys

◀ composers ranging from the 15th-century Alexander Agricola to 21st-century Eric Whitacre (shame they don't go all the way to Zelenka), with a bonus disc of English madrigals and songs. The tracks that I sampled were perfectly competent performances by many different ensembles from around the world; but there's no Byrd, no Tallis, no Elgar, no Howells ... though there is a cantata by Donizetti and a *Te Deum* by Simon Mayr. No Lauridsen, but a disc devoted to Norwegian Lauridsen-soundalike Kim André Arnesen. However, if you fancy binge-listening to many hours of repertoire with a few surprises along the way, the Naxos Choral Collection will fit the bill.

CLARE STEVENS

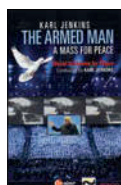
DVDS

Karl Jenkins: The Armed Man – A Mass for Peace; Lament for Syria

Leah-Marian Jones, Yumeji Matsufuji, Pauline Rathmann, Amir Aziz (singers), World Choir for Peace, Valentino Worlitzsch (vc), World Orchestra for Peace / Grant Llewellyn and Sir Karl Jenkins (dirs)

Rondo Media MAJOR 707508, (Blu-ray) MAJOR 707604 [96:00]

★★★



As a record of a historically and emotionally significant performance, this film is spectacular.

A choir of 2,000 representing nearly 30 nations joined the World Orchestra for Peace in the vast Mercedes Benz Arena, Berlin, in November 2018 to commemorate the centenary of the end of the first world war.

Behind the massed ranks of white-clad singers, a specially-commissioned compilation of images from modern warfare provides a searing backdrop, whether it is Hitler's troops goose-stepping through Germany, race riots in America, or harrowing shots of the destruction of the Twin Towers on 11 September 2001 accompanied by anguished screams from the chorus. But the sparseness of Jenkins's writing exposes some weak tuning from the choir; and while having the composer himself on the podium may ensure that *The Armed Man* comes across as he intended, for me it needs a more dynamic conductor to bring it to life.

CLARE STEVENS

ORGAN MUSIC

Nico Muhly: The Lenten Gospels

Chester Music SRO 100178, £15.99

John Rutter: Elegy and Festive Bells

Oxford University Press
ISBN 9780193531550, £7.95

Dan Locklair: Angels – two short tone poems for organ

Subito Music Publishing
91460100, US\$14.95

William Byrd: Organ and Keyboard Works – Fantasias and Selected Works

Desmond Hunter (ed.)
Bärenreiter BA 10897, £26.00 / €29.95

Nico Muhly's intriguing blend of words and music is a substantial work, running to more than 20 minutes. **The Lenten Gospels'**

seven meditations for speaker and organ are a response to thought-provoking liturgical texts by Andrew Hammond, Chaplain of King's Cambridge, where the piece was first performed in 2018; fragments of verbal text are incorporated into the score 'to inform, in however oblique a way, the organist's performance', as Muhly puts it. It's not quite a unique procedure, but imaginative players will find it a spur to think creatively about all aspects of their interpretation. Indeed, performance markings throughout are far from conventional, and some confidence in guided improvisation and the use of simple aleatory techniques is required, along with a keen and imaginative ear for timbre. There are many novel and effective textural touches here, and the whole work has an enigmatic quality inviting further exploration, although a resourceful instrument is a prerequisite.

John Rutter's two pieces plough a far more familiar furrow, but do so with characteristic finesse and confidence. The **Elegy** is a direct descendant of Thalben-Ball and Parry, with a *nobilmente* tenor melody developing to a central climax by way of impeccably judged enharmonic twists: it's a gratefully-written, and not at all difficult, addition to the genre, which will find many applications. **Festive Bells** is an engaging tour through familiar campanological tropes, taking in a rather Elgarian Big Tune along the way – one of those helpful pieces which is easier than it sounds. Both works contain a few modest registration suggestions, but all are perfectly feasible on an



average two-manual instrument. A useful pair of pieces for recital or liturgical performance.

Dan Locklair's pair of works, **Angels – two short tone poems for organ**, is rather more demanding. Each is based on a text from the psalms. The first is more melodically conceived, alternating two discrete blocks of material and building to a climax before a quiet ending; the second is a vigorous and metrically-irregular dance-toccata, which concludes with the theme in the pedal reeds. Its percussive rhythms generate considerable energy and excitement, and they need a tight grip in performance, as well as meticulous articulation.

English keyboard music of the late 16th and early 17th century contains some real glories, many of them by Byrd, and several of them are in Desmond Hunter's excellent new anthology. **Organ and Keyboard Works – Fantasias and Selected Works** draws on the main MS collections, as well as other sources, to give a conspectus of Byrd's output in this genre, and includes short preludes and fantasias as well as longer and more difficult works which approach the epic. Editorial material is first-rate, with discussion and analysis of fingering and ornamentation

▶

CHORAL SELECTION



Simplicity reigns in works for mixed voices by Will Todd, Matthew Martin, Jussi Chydenius, Cheryl Francis-Hoad and Sir John Tavener

In the wake of his mother's death in 2011, Will Todd wrote several pieces with her in mind for his favourite combination of mixed voices, piano, bass and drums. They became a six-movement work entitled **Songs of Peace** (Mixed voices & pno, opt. bass and drums; Boosey and Hawkes, £11.99). Todd would not be the first to discover that he had accidentally been writing what we might call a Requiem (Fauré had a similar experience), though this is a very personal tribute and only at the outset uses words from the old Catholic Latin text. Those who know this composer's music will find nothing strikingly new here, but Todd has done what he usually does extremely well. Two of the movements are for upper voices only: one is a powerful flight of fancy based on the well-known hymn 'Just as I am', and this and the fifth movement strongly feature the pianist. Texts for three of the movements are provided by the composer himself. There is little life/death drama in this work; rather, the overall sensation is warmth, and the overall theme is love. Bass and drums are optional, but the pianist will need to be comfortable with a jazz-orientated role. I'm sure this work will soon become a fixture in the choral repertoire.

In my formative years I remember a number of choirmasters saying, 'There is no finer sound than that of a group of singers (however large) singing very quietly'. Matthew Martin has taken this

▼ Cheryl Francis-Hoad: her *Bogoróditse Dévo, Ráduysia* has 'magical quality'



to heart in his setting of the old antiphon **O Salutaris Hostia** (S(div) ATB & org; Novello, £2.75). The piece barely rises above a whisper, and the musical building blocks are simplicity itself: the organ has a rising step-wise motif accompanied by a slower contrary-motion phrase. The vocal lines mostly feature repeated-pitch openings until the final section, which is laid over a long-held pedal. (The pedals are used very sparingly throughout). The effect of the whole is quite mesmeric.

I have clearly craved musical simplicity in my choices this month. Jussi Chydenius's **Deep in the Night** (SATB unacc.; Oxford University Press, £2.45) starts with a pop-style 'ground' for bass voices which accompanies an alto melody in similar style. The melody becomes a duet, then a trio; only at this latter point is there any variation for the basses, who may be in danger of suffering from Pachelbel-Canon-Syndrome by this time. But so long as they manage to stay awake they can contribute to the extended coda of what is a very effective three-minute nocturne.

Magic turns to might through a grand crescendo

Cheryl Francis-Hoad also uses *ostinato* in her setting of **Bogoróditse Dévo, Ráduysia** (SATB unacc.; Chester Music, £2.75). The rising and falling first phrase is to be found somewhere in the texture throughout the piece, giving it an almost magical quality. Otherwise the composer has taken a leaf out of her romantic Russian-school predecessors – magic gradually turns to might through a grand *crescendo*. From its peak to the end of the piece is quite a short journey; for structural balance might there have been an extra four bars? But this is a small cavil, and shouldn't put anyone off performing this most effective work.

Chester Music has also chosen to offer us **Awake Thou That Sleepest** by Sir John Tavener (Bar sol, ATBB & org. ped; Chester Music, £2.25). I'm not quite sure why. It is an excerpt from *The Veil of the Temple*, Tavener's *magnum opus* scored for huge forces and lasting over seven hours. This fragment consists of one phrase repeated nine times by altos, tenors and basses, over an organ pedal bottom C which sounds throughout the entire piece. Above this, a baritone soloist sings the words of the title on one note nine times. The whole is one great crescendo. In the context of the original work there would always be a place for two-and-a-half minutes of music that apparently does little and goes nowhere. Left to speak for itself, it says nothing about a fine composer no longer able to have a quietly restraining conversation with his publisher.

After an early career as a freelance choral director and counter-tenor, Jeremy Jackman was a member of the King's Singers for ten years. In 1990 he resumed a career in conducting and leading workshops. He is currently musical director of the English Baroque Choir, and the Cecilian Singers in Leicester. www.jeremyjackman.co.uk

◀ being of particular interest, although more guidance on the realisation of proportional relationships within pieces would perhaps be helpful for players less experienced in this idiom. But this is a minor point: overall this is a very welcome and expertly-conceived collection.

STEPHEN FARR

CHORAL MUSIC

James MacMillan: *St John Passion*

S bar, SATB (div)

Boosey & Hawkes, HPS 1604
(study score), £68.50

A Choral Sequence from the *St John Passion*

Nigel Perrin (ed.)

SATB (div) & org., perc (opt.)

Boosey & Hawkes ISBN 978-1-78454-068-5, £15.99



James MacMillan composed his *St John Passion* in 2007. This 90-minute, ten-movement work was written for the 80th birthday of Sir Colin Davis, who conducted the world premiere in the Barbican in 2008, as well as the US premiere in Boston in 2010 (the Boston Symphony Orchestra was involved in the commission as well as the LSO). MacMillan's *Passion* calls for large and supremely able forces. The Narrator is sung by a chamber choir (compare Arvo Pärt's *St John Passion*, which uses a vocal quartet for the role). The part of Christ is taken by a baritone soloist (again compare Pärt's *Passio*), and a large chorus

(split 12 ways in places) and a large orchestra are required as well. However, any comparisons with Pärt's tintinnabuli style are null. Where Pärt invokes an emotional response by repetition, understatement, and consonant undulation, MacMillan impresses the listener with atmospheric contrast, high drama, colour, edge, and sensory metaphor. There are references to the music of Britten (*War Requiem* and *Billy Budd*), a direct quotation of Bach's Passion Chorale, two fleeting references to the opening of Wagner's *Tristan*, a last-movement tune that owes something to Holst, and an ending to the third movement of Beethovenian dominance.

Boosey's newly-released **pocket score** of MacMillan's *St John Passion* doesn't, of course, fit in your pocket. But it is a thing of great beauty; you can wonder for hours at the production values alone. And the notation contained within the score is captivating and challenging. MacMillan's orchestration is detailed and innovative. There are many moments of full orchestral power, but there are even more moments where the filigree of orchestral tracery and sparing use of the instruments are overwhelming in aural precision: double woodwind; strong brass; lots of percussion; and strings which split 16 ways, as at the very opening of the first movement. The choral writing is also – as you'd expect from Sir James – technically breathtaking and effective. The chamber choir's work is exacting, but the work for the large chorus is arguably even more demanding, not least because the chorus takes all the roles that aren't Christ or the Narrator (Peter, Pilate, the crowd etc.). This not a

piece that can be tackled by most choral societies.

Fortunately, help is at hand. Nigel Perrin has extracted almost 20 minutes of choral music from MacMillan's *St John Passion* to be sung with organ accompaniment and optional percussion. Ideally much of this **Choral Sequence** should be performed a cappella, although an organ reduction is provided at all times for safety's sake. It is in this version that many of us are going to experience this fabulous work at first hand, and Perrin has chosen wisely. Perrin's selection is prefaced by Bach's Passion Chorale, which is quoted by MacMillan in the section with which Perrin's sequence ends. You need a choir that is comfortable working *divisi* (three ways in the case of sopranos) and which is made up of singers who are able to meet the composer's considerable vocal demands. MacMillan's *St John Passion* is passionate, and for that passion to be transmitted, there has to be a secure technical foundation on which to build a performance. But what a work MacMillan's *St John Passion* is, and how welcome is this derived choral sequence.

JEREMY SUMMERLY

Gary Carpenter: *Winter*

SSA & pno

Cadenza CAZGCW 1N01, £2.75

Judith Weir: *Day by Day*

SSA & pno

Chester Music CH 87813, £3.50

Gary Carpenter is widely known for his concert music, film scores and operas, so this is a fantastic opportunity for singers to have a chance to perform a piece by this composer written specifically for upper voices.

Winter is one of a number of settings by Gary Carpenter that were commissioned by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, and it is included in *The Food of Love vol.2*, published by Cadenza.

The piece is based on a setting of Shakespeare's words from Act 5 of *Love's Labour's Lost*, with its raw images that capture the intense cold of winter: 'When icicles hang by the wall', and 'Milk is frozen in the pail, when blood is nipt and ways be foul' for example. Shakespeare's text is energising to speak as well as to sing, with its almost sprung rhythm and sense of urgency as one idea piles on top of another. Gary Carpenter sets this brilliantly, with three vocal lines weaving in and out of each other supported by a piano accompaniment with quirky rhythmic syncopation that, while presenting the main thematic ideas, hurtles through an overarching minor tonality, blurred by dissonant harmony. I love this fiery, edgy score and the potential it presents for a choir to possibly display some operatic verve. Also, as it is Shakespeare, it is great for programming at any time of year.

It is also very good news to have an increasing number of pieces for upper voices by Judith Weir, the Master of the Queen's Music and recently composer-in-residence with the BBC Singers. Written for the Chamber Choir of Burntwood School, **Day by Day** was premiered by them in March 2019 at the Royal Festival Hall, London, as part of 'A Brighter Sound 2019', presented by the Wandsworth Schools' Music Service. This is a setting of six Haiku poems with seasonal

© B. EALOVEGA



▲ Judith Weir: her *Day by Day* comprises six 'beautifully crafted' pieces

◀ themes and a total performing time of eight minutes. The first of these classic Japanese texts is 'Winter Solitude' (Basho), in which Weir creates a mysterious effect through almost call-and-response melodic writing supported by gong-like gentle declamations on the piano. 'Winter Garden' (Basho) continues with the same supporting piano accompaniment, with a more fervent outpouring on the word 'singing' set with light staccato cross rhythms, and finally the delicate ending 'thinned to a tread' for the top soprano line which will require crystal clear singing. Then in 'First Winter Rain' (Basho) the setting is more playful in 3/4 metre with dewdrop-like delicate vocal lines. 'The Spring Sea' (Buson) is more strident, with a dotted rhythm accompaniment and, in this two-part setting, the lyrical

soprano and alto lines often form consonant intervals. 'Insects on a Bough' (Issa) has another bell-like accompaniment, supporting busy semi-quaver passage of 'la la la' settings weaving through the words 'insects on a bough', floating down river' and 'still singing'. This three-part setting, with its scale-like passages and moments in parallel thirds, will be highly satisfying to sing. Last, 'Day by Day' (Basho) has a strong lilting 5/8 rendering of this uplifting text leading to a final unresolved, questioning piano chord with whole-tone qualities which echoes the somewhat abstract essence of the texts throughout. The score is highly approachable and manageable for choirs of varying experience although, for a high level performance, it will require detailed vocal work in order to manage the staccato lines in the second piece in particular.

With their delicate energy, these are really beautifully crafted pieces, which will be artistically enriching to study and to perform. Also, although thematically the set of pieces focuses heavily on winter, the warmer seasons are also touched upon and so it stands as a further very high-quality composition for upper voices that is possible to programme throughout the year.

JOY HILL

BOOKS

Palestrina for All: Unwrapping, singing, celebrating

Jonathan Boswell

J. Boswell, ISBN 978-1721968954, p/b, 176pp, £6.23, (Kindle ed.) £3



'I hate Palestrina' was the burden of an opinion piece by the chief music critic of one of Scotland's

broadsheets some years ago, prompted by this reviewer having a wee contretemps with him about the Italian sacred music maestro during interval drinks. In short, he was convinced that his experience as a music student had inoculated him permanently against the pleasures of Palestrina's pure, sublime, spiritual counterpoint. He is not alone. Could this wonderful, welcome, long overdue book be the answer?

It seems incredible that something so worthwhile and necessary should be self-published, but here it is, illustrated clearly and to the point with sections of score, packed with fascinating and illuminating statistics, not only a powerful and easily digested distillation of Boswell's

own and others' research, but also an invaluable guide to programming Palestrina's music both for the liturgy and concert hall. Boswell places Palestrina in historical and theological context (he has firm grasp on the latter), tracking the liturgical year with illuminating explanations for the uninitiated. This is truly an essential companion to all singers/leaders, whether amateur or professional, who want to understand Palestrina through performance or by listening to his music, not merely setting the seal on the rehabilitation of a much-misunderstood master, but also teaching one how to hear, appreciate and absorb the internal workings of Palestrina's counterpoint, rather than be distracted by the line highest in pitch.

Here is a refreshing lack of jargon, a grand demystification of both man and music, rescuing Palestrina from both the dead hand of academic discipline and the ridiculously romantic pedestal erected by Pfiztner and others. It's a great boon for Palestrina's fans, of course, but if you've struggled to get on with his music, maybe having been turned off by time spent as a music student obliged to replicate his style for harmony and counterpoint classes, bored by poorly conceived performances, baffled by his musical/spiritual philosophy, then this is aimed at you. If this brief book (there isn't a word too many) doesn't change those feelings, then surely nothing can. It should be on the shelves of music students, choir directors, church musicians, academics, singers (both amateur and professional), and listeners, and it's so approachable and modestly priced that it really is 'for all'.

REBECCA TAVENER

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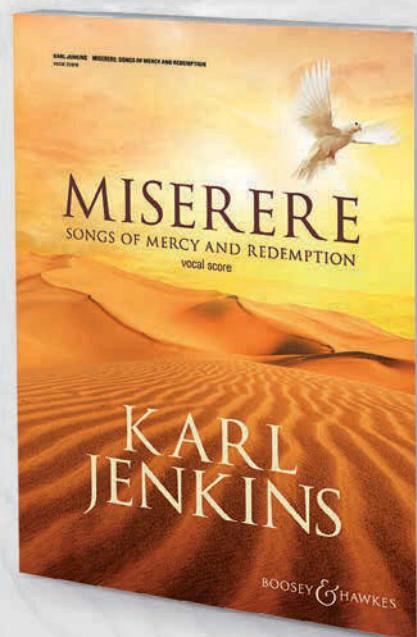
Visuals: Peterlin & Mark McNeilly

KARL JENKINS *Miserere: Songs Of Mercy & Redemption*

Miserere: Songs of Mercy and Redemption is a sequence of reflections on the theme of mercy, in response to the recent and ongoing tragic conflicts in the Middle East and other regions.

Woven around verses selected from Psalm 51, the inspiration for composers from Allegri to Pärt, the work features a range of settings of Rumi, St Thomas Aquinas, Isaac Watts, Carol Barratt and Dylan Thomas.

Scored for countertenor (or mezzo-soprano), solo cello, mixed chorus, strings, harp and percussion, *Miserere: Songs of Mercy and Redemption* is a profound meditation on humanity and atonement.



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MELANIE LAWLOR, PA TO THE ORGANIST AND MASTER OF THE CHORISTERS



COURTESY MELANIE LAWLOR

months to get used to the quality and the style of the music. I used to be a tax consultant, and when I moved to Wells I was office manager for a financial adviser business. Then at the same time they announced the office was closing, my job here at the Cathedral became vacant. That was 10 years ago. But before then I was just a member of the congregation – I'm not a musician myself but I can appreciate the quality of the music.

Having lived in Wells for five years already, being a member of the congregation and married to a virger, I had a reasonable understanding of what went on in the Cathedral and knew lots of people. When the job came up, it was a really good opportunity to be more involved in what was my church. It was great – I had a lot to learn, especially about music, but I already knew the place and the people, so that was a big draw for me.

The first thing I always do is check my emails – I like to get back to people as quickly as I can, as I want to give the best impression of the Cathedral. There are certain things that happen every day, and there are certain things that happen at the same time every year, and there are things that just come up randomly

work, and their whole family is behind them completely. I do really love the choristers and their parents – they're incredible people.

Cathedral music is important because there's so much history and tradition that we need to maintain – we don't want to lose hundreds of years of choral tradition. We need to introduce people to that, whether they be choristers coming in to learn the music for the first time, or whether it's a visitor who has never been to a cathedral or even a church service before. I think what's really important as well is that here at Wells we do a lot with new music and modern-day composers. There's a risk that people might dismiss that and say we don't need more, but we do and there are some fantastic contemporary composers whom we should support. I feel it's really important to maintain and promote the tradition of church music and to keep singing the old, but also champion the new.

I had a call from someone a couple of years ago who didn't listen to choral music, but their mum had just passed away and one of her favourite songs was a hymn on our *Songs of Sunshine* album; they asked if we had a

I would go to the Cathedral every Sunday and just sit there in awe

I moved to Wells 15 years ago because my husband took up a job as a virger at the Cathedral. Before that we went to our local church, but our only exposure to church music was within a small parish setting. The first time I heard cathedral music was actually the day of my husband's interview – I'd come with him and we'd spent the day in Wells, and then we decided to stay for Evensong. We were sitting in the quire and, as people who didn't usually go to a cathedral, it was all a bit daunting. Then the organ started playing and we thought, "That doesn't sound like the organ we're used to!" When the choir started to sing, we looked at each other and I think I said to my husband, "Are they singing, or is that a CD?" We'd never heard anything like it before.

He got the job and we moved to Wells; I would go to the Cathedral every Sunday and just sit there in awe. It took me months and

at any time. Basically, it's emails, and then on to the projects of the day and the time. I like the variety – there's always a surprise lurking somewhere. I deal with many different aspects of the Cathedral, not just the music. Even within a single day, one minute I can be talking to a potential chorister parent and the next I'm working on the budget, then I've got to arrange a concert, and then I might have a safeguarding query.

One of the things I really like is dealing with visiting choirs. For them, coming to sing with their choir in the Cathedral is a huge achievement, so it's exciting for them and it's a bit of a pilgrimage as well. Also, the choristers we have here – the children – are fabulous. The dedication of these kids – you've got an eight-year-old child who's singing six days a week, sometimes seven, on top of their school

recording we could send for her funeral. I also met a man who was sitting underneath the Vicars' Hall, listening to our voluntary choir rehearsing. He was suffering from grief and was very emotional; he said he had walked past and thought that angels were singing. Cathedral music can have an impact on people's lives; it can sneak up on them.

Jeremy Cole has just been appointed our new organist and master of the choristers today, so there are exciting times ahead. A lot will be happening at Wells in 2020 and beyond, which is great. It keeps it fresh for the people working here, but also for the congregation and the visitors. There's never a quiet day in the Cathedral. ■

Melanie Lawlor, PA to the organist and master of the choristers at Wells Cathedral, was speaking to Harriet Clifford.



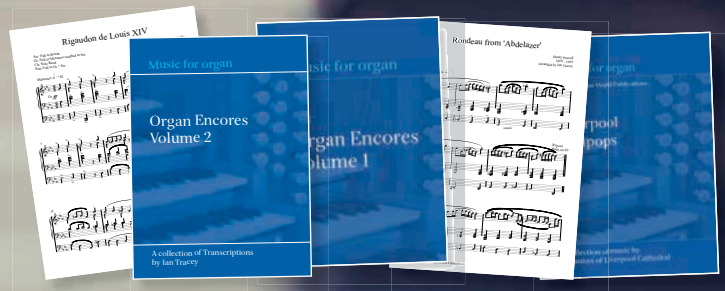
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